

Preserving the Great Lakes

The Great Lakes. One of the major landmarks of the United States. Countless people flock to the shores to behold the exquisite and breathtaking views. Yet even now, these majestic lakes are being polluted with trash, bacteria, and harmful chemicals. Residents of the surrounding communities should do their best to preserve these unique landmarks in our area. This involves performing better maintenance on septic systems, and actively striving to minimize runoff pollution. If the populace around the Great Lakes don't take action, these grand bodies of water could be irreparably polluted.

One way to reduce pollutants entering the Great Lakes is to better maintain the surrounding septic systems. Most of these systems involve a centralized treatment plant where the wastewater is processed and treated, and then circulated into a river (or other body of water), or a soil drain-field. When correctly installed and maintained, these septic systems provide effective treatment. However, if they are incorrectly installed or maintained, leaks can develop in the tank, causing wastewater to contaminate ground water, rivers, and lakes with bacteria and diseases. In fact, septic systems are rarely inspected after they are installed (*Septic Systems Overview*). If the upkeep and maintenance on septic systems is improved, the amount of pollution entering the bodies of water in the Great Lakes area will significantly decrease.

Another way to minimize pollution is to reduce the amount of storm runoff that drains into the lakes. In heavily populated areas, there is a higher concentration of hard cement and pavement that prevents rainwater and melting snow from absorbing into the ground below. This causes the water to flow along streets and sidewalks until it all goes down a storm drain. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, "The stormwater runoff carries pollutants such as oil, dirt, chemicals, and lawn fertilizers directly to streams and rivers, where they seriously harm water quality" (*Protecting Water Quality From Urban Runoff*). Some things communities can do to reduce the amount of harmful toxins being washed into the Great Lakes area is to use street cleaners more frequently, and assemble crews to go out and pick up trash. Homeowners can also take action by using less lawn fertilizer, picking up

after their pets, and correctly disposing of motor oils and other chemicals detrimental to the environment (*Protecting Water Quality From Urban Runoff*). Reducing the amount of runoff pollution entering the Great Lakes is another important step in ending pollution.

The Great Lakes are an inspiring part of nature, and should be protected at all costs. This is why efforts must be made to improve septic systems, and to prevent harmful runoff from entering the waterways. Taking these steps will ensure that these magnificent lakes will be around for years to come.

Works Cited:

“Septic Systems Overview.” *Environmental Protection Agency*, Dec. 4, 2018,

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