

Chautauqua Watershed Notes
From the Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy
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Our Junky Watershed

By Jeff Tome

For the Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy



*Garbage that is not properly disposed
of can end up polluting the lake.*

These are the things that we pulled out of the lake: a bicycle, 3 golf clubs, 7 tires, a car battery, an exhaust pipe, part of an axle and innumerable bottles, cans and cigarette butts.

Some of those things got into the lake because people couldn't afford – or didn't want to afford – to dispose of it properly. Other things seemed more symbolic. I can imagine a frustrated golfer driving up to the lake and throwing the clubs in the water to get rid of the evils of golf in his life.

I would like to think that many things end up in the lake by accident. A

water bottle falls off the side of a boat and can't be retrieved. A soda can is left next to the lake when someone moves onto other things and is carried away by the next flood.

It's amazing how much pure trash gets into the lake. The Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy owns land on the outlet of the lake. The spring floodwaters carry with them bottles, cans, wrappers, and trash of all sorts. It seems to be an inexhaustible supply and far more than there should be from bottles falling off boats.

The truth is that some of the trash in the lake came from a long ways away. Bottles thrown into ditches are washed into the lake when there are rainstorms. Wrappers that are dropped in a parking lot blow into a ditch and then wash into the lake.

Storm drains around the lake also carry debris from the streets of towns and cities into the lake. There is so much stuff that washes into the lake that there are days when the weedcutters on the lake stop cutting weeds and start harvesting garbage from the lake. I think one of the things people don't realize is that throwing something into the lake doesn't make it go away. It makes that thing someone else's problem. It washes onto the shores of the lake or goes downstream.

I found, for the first time ever, a computer washed up on the shores of a creek. So, what's the solution? The only thing to stop saying "That's someone else's problem". Too often, people complain about things without ever taking action.

The solution is for everyone who cares to pick up just a little bit of garbage until it's gone. I've made a game out of rolling tires out of the woods. I'll roll a tire a couple of hundred feet every time I go for a hike until it's been rolled a mile or two out of the woods.

Pick up garbage along the road a couple times a month to keep it from washing into the lake. Carry a shopping bag into the woods when you go for a hike to pick up things that others have left behind.

People are more likely to litter and leave junk in an area where there is already litter and junk. If we all work to try and make things look better, others are less likely to junk it up. Be a part of the solution. Help clean things up just a little bit. If everyone does a little bit, a lot gets done and the whole area will look much better.

Jeff Tome writes for the Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy. For more information on their mission or how to find their nature preserves around the lake, go to their website www.chautauquawatershed.org. The Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy is a private, not-for-profit, 501(c)(3) organization with a mission to preserve and enhance the water quality, scenic beauty and ecological health of the lakes, streams and watersheds of the Chautauqua region. Its urgent focus is to conserve the endangered natural shore lands of Chautauqua Lake, which provide fish and wildlife habitat and pollution filtering functions essential to a healthy lake. Only four miles (10%) of the lake's shoreline remains in a natural, undeveloped condition. The Conservancy is funded primarily through membership donations. Its 2008 annual membership campaign is currently underway. It is presently raising funds to conserve the Chautauqua Lake's most important remaining natural shoreline habitats, undertake programs to address the root causes of the conditions that fuel lake plant growth, and manage its preserves. It is the only local organization conserving lands in perpetuity for these purposes.