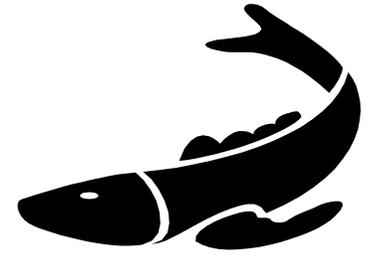


# Tonetta Lake Advisory Committee

Sponsored by the Southeast Town Board

May 2004 Issue #1

## Protecting and Improving Lake Tonetta – A Shared Responsibility



Residents of the Town of Southeast are fortunate in having the opportunity to enjoy one of our most precious resources, Lake Tonetta. Lake Tonetta is not only an environmental asset, but more importantly, is a source of beauty and enjoyment where we can experience the pleasures of swimming, boating, fishing or just thoughtful observation.

The Town Beach and Tonetta Heights Beach on Lake Tonetta are tested regularly through the year by the Putnam County Board of Health, and is considered safe for recreational purposes.

However Lake Tonetta has, in recent years, suffered the effects of increased development and the transition of summer homes into year-round residences. The increase of nutrients flowing into the lake through failing septics, washing machines, fertilizers, roadway drainage and other sources, has

caused some of the recent problems, including aquatic plant overgrowth and algae blooms.

Even if you don't have lakefront property, you are probably in the Lake Tonetta watershed. This extends up Brewster Hill, including Tonetta Heights, much of Tonetta Lake Park and thanks to the storm drains, as far away as Route 312. What can be done? In this newsletter we will address ways that the homeowner, residents and visitors can help improve the quality of the lake.

Please share with us your opinions by contacting a committee member or the Town Recreation Office at 279-3915.

## Pick Up After Your Pet

Keep your yard free of waste, don't leave pet waste lying around in the watershed.

## Waterfowl – Please do not Feed

The increasing population of Canadian Geese, Sea Gulls and other waterfowl is creating a problem for Lake Tonetta. These birds create a large amount of waste which add unwanted nutrients and bacteria to the lake and they

stir up sediment from the Lake bottom.

Feeding these birds encourages a larger population than the lake would normally sustain and causes them to stay longer before migrating south.





# Fertilizers and Water Quality

Aquatic plants, like their counterparts on land, require nutrients to grow and reproduce. Phosphorous is the nutrient responsible for much of the overabundant growth of aquatic plants and algae. Phosphorous is a nutrient all plants and healthy lawns need for root growth; however, most soils already have enough phosphorous and adding more will be a WASTE OF MONEY because it won't help your lawn or garden.

When it rains, runoff from lawns and gardens enters the lake directly or through storm wa-

ter drains that eventually lead into the lake. To limit the amount of phosphorous entering Lake Tonetta, we suggest using fertilizer sparingly, if at all. If you must fertilize your lawn or garden, use a zero or low phosphorous fertilizer.

**When shopping for fertilizer, remember that Nitrogen is the first number, Phosphorous the middle and Potassium (K), the third. For example, 4 – 0 – 10 is N – P – K.**

## Pest Management

Runoff containing lawn and garden pesticides also creates a problem for the Lake Tonetta environment. The Cornell Cooperative Extension promotes a comprehensive program called Integrated Pest Management. This is a nationwide process to monitor pest invasion and to control or treat the invasion with the least toxic method or with cultivation methods

## Avoid Toxic Chemicals

Remember not to poison your Lake with toxic chemicals. Be extremely careful when handling gasoline, oil, paint, drain cleaners, bleach and other toxic materials in your home and yard.



## Septic Repair Program

Putnam County is finalizing a "Septic Repair Program" using \$3.3 million of the East of Hudson Water Quality Improvement funds. The purpose of this fund is to design, implement and administer a household septic system inspection and rehabilitation program in certain sections of Putnam County. It is contemplated that Lake Tonetta will be designated as a "priority area" which would make all residents within 200 feet of the Lake eligible to participate.

Preliminary plans include that in exchange for the voluntary agreement by participating

residents to allow a testing of their septic system and to properly maintain their systems (including a pump-out of the system at least every five years), the program would rehabilitate or replace septic systems at no cost to the home owner.

The Tonetta Lake Advisory Committee encourages residents to keep their eyes open for any materials which will come from Putnam County regarding this program.



# Buffer Zone Plantings

85% of available phosphorous is bonded to small soil particles or sediment. A strip of forest or plants along the lakeshore functions as a FILTER by removing sediment and other suspended solids from surface runoff. In addition to removing up to 80% of the phosphorous -- ammonium, nitrates and other nutrients can be absorbed by buffer plants.

Ideal recommendations for a buffer zone range from 20 feet to 75 feet of managed and undisturbed forest. Obviously this may not be possible or practical in most areas of Tonetta's shore-line. However a buffer of any width will be of great help.

An added

## Lawn Care

- Cut lawns to 3 inches. This cuts down on weeds and watering, increases root growth and saves you time!
- Leave the clippings on the lawn. This will act as a mulch and save on watering.
- Leave an unmowed buffer strip at the edge of the Lake
- If you must fertilize, FALL is the best

## Tonetta Lake – Recreation for All

MOST OF ALL, we encourage you to take full advantage of the recreational activities at Lake Tonetta.

The Town of Southeast Beach has an ideal location on the Lake and offers swimming, boating and picnicking. For information on

benefit is that a shore line planting of at least three feet in height will also discourage geese from coming ashore.

There are many ornamental grasses, flowering shrubs and perennials such as native irises and joe pye weed that can make a buffer zone planting an attractive addition to your landscape.

## Cornell Cooperative Extension

time.

Your Cooperative Extension office is a valuable resource for information on these topics. They can be reached at 278-6738 or visited at their Geneva Road office (next door to the Department of Motor Vehicles):

- A list of local nurseries who stock low or no Phosphorous fertilizer.
- Pamphlets about Integrated Pest Management.
- Lists of plants for buffer zone plantings.
- A list of lawn care providers that offer zero Phosphorous products.

their programs call: 279-3915.

It is also important to join and support you local Lake Association. They are a vital part of our community.

**TONETTA LAKE ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

Sponsored by the Town Board of the Town of  
Southeast  
1 Main Street  
Brewster, NY 10509



## Tonetta Lake Advisory Committee

In January 2004, the Town Board of the Town of Southeast created a committee comprised of local volunteers called the “Tonetta Lake Advisory Committee” in order to provide advise as to how to best preserve and improve the quality of Lake Tonetta. We would like to recognize the following individuals:

Raymond Knox, Chairman  
Don Hazen  
Paul Johnson (Town Board Liaison)  
Mike Langley  
Karl Lebitsch  
Bob Lund  
Peggy Papp  
Karen Ratajack  
Ralph Woodgate  
Robert Zubrycki (Editor)

**These volunteers are charged with assess-**

**ing, analyzing and recommending to the Town Board a comprehensive action plan for addressing the issues that Lake Tonetta face. One of these recommendations is the creation of this newsletter which the Town will circulate on a periodic basis.**

**Lake Tonetta is safe, clean and we need to protect it. Please read this newsletter and together as a community, we can take steps to preserve and improve our lake, Lake Tonetta.**

**Sincerely yours,**

**John J. Dunford - Supervisor  
Town of Southeast**