

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **Communities Pull Together to Fight Stormwater Pollution**

The Chittenden County Regional Stormwater Education Program (RSEP) is launching a new public education program aimed at getting residents personally involved in helping to reduce stormwater pollution in Lake Champlain.

"We know that the people in our towns are concerned about the health of our streams and the lake. Everyone has a vested interest in clean water. A significant part of our job is to help provide information so people can assist in the care of this valuable resource," said RSEP chair Dennis Lutz, Town Engineer for the Town of Essex. "This program aims at giving residents the tools they need to make changes in their own lifestyles to lower the levels of sediment runoff and phosphorous and improve water quality in the streams entering the lake," he said.

"Our educational efforts will be voluntary and cooperative," Lutz said. Serving with him on the RSEP Steering Committee are officials from eight Chittenden County towns, Burlington International Airport, and the University of Vermont. Participating as non-voting members are representatives of the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission, the Vermont Agency of Transportation, the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation and the Champlain Water District.

Total funding for the five-year program is expected to reach at least \$250,000. The RSEP will use printed materials, television and radio to help people learn how they can improve water quality in the lake with simple changes in their everyday lives. The group envisions families learning about and working together on issues involving runoff and stream and lake pollution, much as they did with the trash recycling efforts in the county.

The rewards of pitching in for cleaner lake water will be noticeable to everyone, he said. "Lake Champlain is the major source of drinking water in the county and the center of

much of our recreational activity. It's critical for public health, especially for children and pets. Even our economy and property values depend on having a healthy and clean lake."

Increasing incidents of blue-green algae pollution, poisoned pets, high pollution levels in streams and the lake, and summer beach closings have raised public awareness of the problems caused by pollutants running into the water. The new education program will help people learn to care for landscaping, lawns and gardens without sending harmful chemicals into water that reaches the lake. It will educate families about fertilizers, household chemicals, automotive products, and home construction projects that can needlessly harm the lake and will show how to reduce the environmental impacts of those activities.

The program is coordinated by the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission. After the general information phase, later phases of the program will focus on the ongoing efforts to reduce stormwater pollution by the Burlington Airport, University of Vermont, municipalities participating in RSEP, and the business and commercial sector.

The educational program is part of an overall comprehensive stormwater permit effort required by federal law and embraced by the RSEP. "Despite legal appeals of other aspects of the towns' efforts, we are moving forward with the educational program because of its enormous importance to our communities and our own commitment to the program," Lutz said.

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