

WE DEPEND ON LAKES FOR OUR HEALTH AND WEALTH

BLUE LAKES IS A REWARDING
VOLUNTARY PROGRAM THAT
SUSTAINS LAKE HEALTH TODAY
AND FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS.

ACHIEVING BLUE LAKE STATUS
HAS THE POTENTIAL TO IMPROVE
PROPERTY VALUES WHILE
PRESERVING NATURE'S GIFTS.

IT IS YOUR OPPORTUNITY TO HAVE AN
IMPACT AND CULTIVATE A CARING COMMUNITY.

BECOME A BLUE LAKES SUPPORTER!

**EVERYONE SHOULD HAVE A STAKE
IN THE HEALTH OF THEIR LAKE**

Lakes provide community enjoyment, fresh water, and a connection to nature. However, lakes are a vulnerable and limited resources that are being compromised. Our actions have an impact - from how we develop, to how we play. The program provides an eco-label in recognition of your commitment to stewardship and education and a portfolio of tools resources, and activities that can be tailored to your lake's needs.

www.bluelakes.ca
705-457-1222





Find Out More...

The Blue Lakes ecolabel is a program that provides a template for action and education. It is a label and a portfolio of tools, resources, and activities that can be tailored to your lake's needs. For instance, the program provides educational opportunities, forums, and funding for naturalization and lake-wide projects to improve lake health. The program also provides access to a comprehensive database and app that tracks lake health.

An ecolabel is a voluntary method of environmental certification that recognizes the adoption of stewardship principles or practices. Ecolabels are found around the world. A similar label is the Blue Flag program that certifies beaches and marinas across the globe (www.blueflag.global)

Blue Lakes is not a political initiative, but rather a community of practice.

The label and program is delivered by third party charities of The Land Between and Watersheds Canada to ensure impartiality, and fairness while providing start-up services, resources and support.

The Blue Lake is a voluntary commitment to achieve and advance stewardship goals, with no minimum threshold of participation.

The Blue Lakes Charter (stewardship goals) focuses on six areas of performance:

1. Shoreline health
2. Citizen Science Monitoring
3. Nutrient and Input Management
4. Communications and Social Outreach
5. Habitat Management
6. Invasive Species Management

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Find Out More...

Blue Lake committee members can include numerous participants, from landowners to businesses to local governments. An individual can become a Blue Lakes participant, but a group of people (lake association) is ideal.

The process for becoming a Blue Lake includes: collecting a group of participants that become a committee responsible for program delivery and assessment, filling out a basic application, agreeing to the Blue Lakes charter (goals/code of conduct), and to providing data to the Blue Lake database. Once these tasks are completed, you can contact a representative at The Land Between to begin your journey.

Program participants will receive a self assessment scorecard to track all of their accomplishments and success each year. This is submitted annually to maintain the label. This adds a fun little twist for community members to celebrate their success and see where they rank on the Blue Lakes scoreboard year after year!

In addition to self assessments, and in order to maintain quality, the program completes audits to ensure participants are actively working towards stewardship practices. Success will be measured by a group or individuals ability to improve and advance each year.

The Blue Lakes Program also offers ways to learn, network and grow. Get your passport to Blue Lakes events, workshops, webinars and other resources.

For more information or if you have any questions, please contact:

**The Land Between Charity,
Blue Lakes Program Department
Box 1368 , Haliburton, Ontario K0M 1S0
Info@thelandbetween.ca 705-457-1222**



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The Upside Downside of the Blue Lakes Program

Below are a list of potential scenarios you may encounter that may help you decide whether or not to participate in the Blue Lakes program:

I My lake is pristine and has no known development pressures, what is the benefit of my involvement in the Blue Lakes program?

Participating in the Blue Lakes program can potentially help...

1. Build a baseline of knowledge and information regarding lake health and stewardship
2. Build a community by participating in a program that can bring people together for a common cause
3. Build awareness and capacity to manage future threats and change
4. Provides a road map and tool kit that gives you new and exciting activities and resources that will maintain and enhance the quality of your community and your lake
5. Maintain the value of your lake and waterfront properties

II My lake is experiencing new development proposals and we want to make sure this happens with the least impact to the environment and in accordance with legislation. How will the Blue Lakes program help to ensure educated, sustainable development?

Participating in the Blue Lakes program can potentially help...

1. Provide a collective platform to speak with a unified voice;
2. Provide leverage for aligning local governments in support of lake quality and health;
3. Provide comprehensive and objective data and information related to your lake;
4. Provide best practices;
5. Provides access to a broader community;

III. My lake is overdeveloped with social crowding and little sense of community. How will the Blue Lakes program combat this?

Participating in the Blue Lakes program can potentially help...

1. Cultivate a foundation of practice with common goals;
2. Create a public statement of stewardship practices thereby inspiring, influencing and eventually supporting the maintenance of property values;
3. Promote good behaviour and reconnect community members with nature;
4. Provide groups or organizations with a starting point to address both social and environmental issues;
5. Provide a template from which to grow;

IV. My lake is experiencing Algal blooms, how will Blue Lakes be of benefit in this scenario:

Participating in the Blue Lakes program can potentially help...

1. Gather people in common practice to respond to and manage environmental challenges
2. Assist lake communities in managing water quality and lake health issues (algae blooms, aquatic plants, lighting, safe boating etc.)
3. Leverage support in combating issues
4. Create a community and public statement of practice thereby supporting the maintenance of property values
5. Create standards and best practices to help improve conditions



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The Blue Lakes Charter/ Performance Areas:

The Blue Lakes program charter provides a set of goals for participants to work towards. The charter includes 7 measurements of performance used to determine the annual accomplishment scoreboard. This will allow participants to improve upon their success each year. The areas of performance can encompass projects and initiatives that lakes are already undertaking, and can also be expanded upon. Participants have to make gains in 5 out of 6 areas annually, and also provide input to the Blue Lakes database.

1. Shoreline Health ~ Maintaining and/or improving natural shorelines by increasing the percentage of natural shores from current baseline

Recommended guidelines:

Best outcomes are 75% of shore and basin entirely in natural state*

- a. Reduce the clearing of shoreline plants
- b. Choose healthy setbacks for re-development (accommodate your municipal Official Plan)
- c. Increase natural shores (both width and depth)
- d. Reduce hardened shorelines and surfaces and include more permeable surfaces that allow for proper water filtration
- e. Conduct shoreline audits to track the health and state of your shoreline
- f. Retain the use of trees along shorelines (i.e. trim up rather than cut them down)
- g. Respect spawning areas and therefore timing windows as prescribed by authorities (Department of Fisheries and Oceans, MNR, MECP, CAs) and legislation

*Reference to scientific article

2. Citizen Science Monitoring ~ Watching and reporting of natural species and features

Recommended guidelines:

- a. Conduct water chemistry testing (Lake Partner Program participation)
- b. Keep an angler diary (or fishing log)
- c. Practice bird watching and identification including nest box, breeding bird and loon surveys
- d. Conduct local turtle tallies, frog watch etc.
- e. Participate or conduct bioblitzes (community event to survey different species)
- f. Contribute to Species At Risk (SAR) monitoring
- g. Practice aquatic insect monitoring (Ontario Benthic Biomonitoring Network bugs in the mud)
- h. Practice and record Daphnia/zooplankton monitoring



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The Blue Lakes Charter/ Performance Areas...



3. Nutrient and Input Management ~ Improving water chemistry by limiting what goes into your lake

Recommended guidelines:

- a. Use proven safe (to the environment and human-health) fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides
- b. Manage water with increases in permeable surfaces, downspouts, rain barrels and water gardens
- c. Keep a healthy and maintained septic tank
- d. Limit road salt applications (municipal directed)
- e. Deter geese through native shoreline plants and limited lawn spaces
- f. Manage agricultural runoff

4. Communications and Social Outreach ~ Informing and educating community members about the importance of lake quality - increasing uptake and participation

Recommended guidelines:

- a. Participate in the Blue Lakes Passport to Excellence
- b. Communicate the Blue Lake program with fellow community members
- c. Increase uptake for the Blue Lakes program
- d. Provide BMPs and State of the Resource reports to lake community
- e. Provide educational content, venues and opportunities related to Lake Health
- f. Utilize the Blue Lakes database and online resources
- h. Participate in research and networking with other expertise

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The Blue Lakes Charter/ Performance Areas...



5. Habitat Management, Conservation and Improvement ~ Reducing habitat fragmentation, destruction, and degradation while restoring and improving habitats for local species

Recommended guidelines:

- a. Maintain wildlife habitat - save space for wildlife
- b. Practice better boating practices (minimize wakes near shores, shallows, loon areas and spawning areas)
- c. Respect wildlife and maintain boundaries
- d. Reduce noise and loud (vs. silent) fireworks
- e. Improve fish habitat along shorelines (no clearing of habitat features)
- f. Reduce ecological footprints and hardening of surfaces
- g. Reduce night lighting for wildlife, lakes and human health
- h. Conduct wildlife enhancement projects
- i. Improving connectivity between native habitats

Best outcomes: minimum 60% natural and permeable lot coverage*

*Reference to scientific article

6. Invasive Species Management ~ Decreasing the destruction caused by invasive species through management, education and reporting

Recommended guidelines:

- a. Identify areas of vulnerability to invasive species
- b. Identify invasive species within the community
- c. Identify control and management needs
- d. Educate community members
- e. Apply controls and management as required and by permit

7. Enter water quality, fishery and other data into the Blue Lakes database

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What is Blue Lakes?

The Blue Lakes is an ecolabel program that provides a template for action and education. Specifically, it is an ecolabel that is given to award stewardship excellence, and the label, when provided, comes with a portfolio of tools, resources, and activities that can be tailored to your lake's needs. For instance, the program provides educational opportunities, forums, and funding for naturalization and lake-wide projects to improve lake health. The program also provides access to a comprehensive database and app that tracks lake health.



The program is voluntary, and the label is awarded annually for achieving advancements with the Performance Areas (Code of Conduct) which are scalable and adaptable to be feasible and meaningful for your lake community. Annual self-assessments or score cards are submitted in order to maintain the label.

To enroll, you simply need to gather an informal management group and make a commitment to encourage good stewardship practices. There is no minimum threshold to participate.

The program is overseen by two neutral charities that cannot be influenced by local or financial interests.

What is an ecolabel?



An ecolabel is a voluntary method of environmental certification that recognizes the adoption of stewardship principles or practices. Typically, it is a “seal” that assists the public or the market to identify products or services as being better to the environment than others. Ecolabels help consumers make environmentally responsible choices. They encourage improvements and set standards.

Examples of environmental or eco-labels are the ISO 9000 or 14000 series, the FSC (Forest Stewardship Certification) label for lumber, Non GMO or Organic labelling on food, and the Blue Flag label for marinas and beaches. The Five Star rating system for hotels and resorts is also a form of quality labelling but instead of environmental quality, they speak to quality of business.

The Blue Lakes Program takes cues from the Blue Flag Program.

The Blue Flag program is an ecolabel for international marinas and beaches. The program was established in 1987 with key objectives:

- To improve understanding of the coastal environment, incorporate environmental issues in decision making of local authorities,
- To “work towards sustainable development”, and
- To unite stakeholders in sustainable management and development

The label is awarded annually to marinas and beaches who adopt key behaviours and criteria. However, criteria can be tailored to be appropriate for each location. The Label is delivered through an independent organization, the Foundation for Environmental Education. Delivery through a third party charity ensures that the awarding of the label cannot be influenced by local or financial interests.

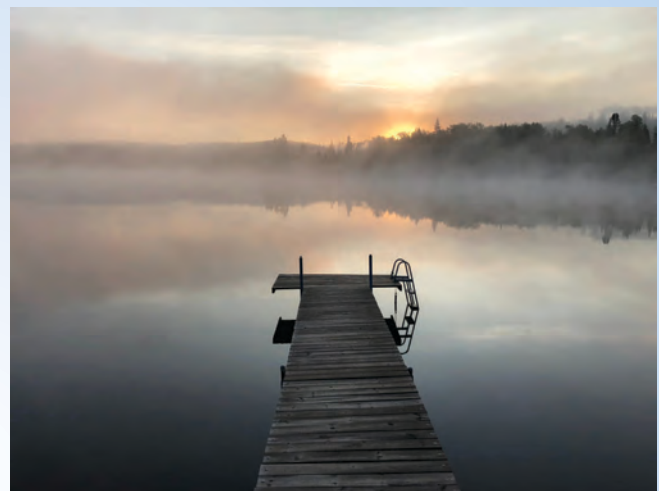
The program was so successful that within 20 years, by 2007, 3312 beaches and marinas adopted the label in 36 countries. In fact, 28 flags are flying across Canada including Toronto Island and Toronto Beaches.

The Benefits

The potential benefits of the Blue Lakes program are comparable to those experienced by the Blue Flag Program:

- Positive reinforcement for participants
- Broad participation across sectors, jurisdictions and stakeholders and the raising of awareness of all stakeholders involved
- Improvements to the quality of life for residents
- Reduction of safety and environmental risks (and therefore an improvement to insurance rates)
- Minimizes potential for environmental infractions and fines
- Maintenance of natural resources, habitats, and beautiful scenery
- Improvements to environmental conditions
- Improved image, reputation and competitiveness for participating businesses - competitive advantage
- Better position for communications with stakeholders (improved platform for communications)
- Increases confidence with government, community, residents etc.
- Leverages government support for programs
- Increased property values
- Increased economic development
- Increased dialogue, the creation of a social norm, and which improves relationships and creates a sense of community
- Provides environmental information so informed choices can be made
- Cultivates behaviours that enable communities to stay responsive to the changing climate and social trends

(Reference: Breda University of Applied Sciences. Blue Flag Program St. Maarten)



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Reducing Risks

The Blue Lakes Program has been created thoughtfully and collaboratively in order to reduce risks to participants:

- A pilot year was launched to tailor and test the program with experts and with landowners, and lake association leaders to provide direction and to bring direct experience and concerns of lake-communities forward.
- The label is based on practices and not on environmental condition of the lake, so that should the label be revoked, it does not inadvertently reduce property values or the reputation of the lake. This consideration was made also because environmental conditions within lakes do not necessarily rebound quickly and may not be caused by human actions alone.
- Lake health data is not shared between lake associations or publicly, so as not to direct undue development pressure, fishing pressure or other attention to lakes that are considered pristine, and so as not to negatively affect property values within lake communities where lakes are experiencing environmental issues.
- Oligotrophic and Mesotrophic lakes are assigned Blue Lakes O and M respectively to alert the public that the varying conditions within the lakes are naturally occurring and understood.
- The label has no minimum threshold for participation, reducing pressure on lake associations and lake communities, and allowing spontaneous increases in uptake and momentum, and where each individual's commitment adds to the strength of the label



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Frequently Asked Questions

A. What is an ecolabel?

An ecolabel is a certification process used to recognize a commitment to sustainability and to award actions that support these goals. The label itself is typically a logo or visual representation of this commitment. Upon registering for the Blue Lakes program, you will receive a window decal to display or Blue Lakes flag to hang at the end of your dock!

B. How do I get started?

To get started, review the Blue Lakes charter and the self assessment scorecard available online; set up a committee responsible for program delivery and assessment; and fill out an online basic application and survey. “Participants” also agree to input any available data for your lake or samples that you take related to fisheries, water quality, etc. into the Blue Lake Database. Once these tasks are completed, you can contact a representative at The Land Between charity to begin your journey.

C. How do I know what the top priority is for my lake?

Top priorities for your lake are determined by data related to your lake’s health (data may be available through the Blue Lakes app and database and/or

through other Citizen Science or sampling programs), and from surveys or public input from lake community residents. Additionally, you can use the Blue Lakes charter and Self Assessment Scorecard online to guide you.

D. How do I get people involved?

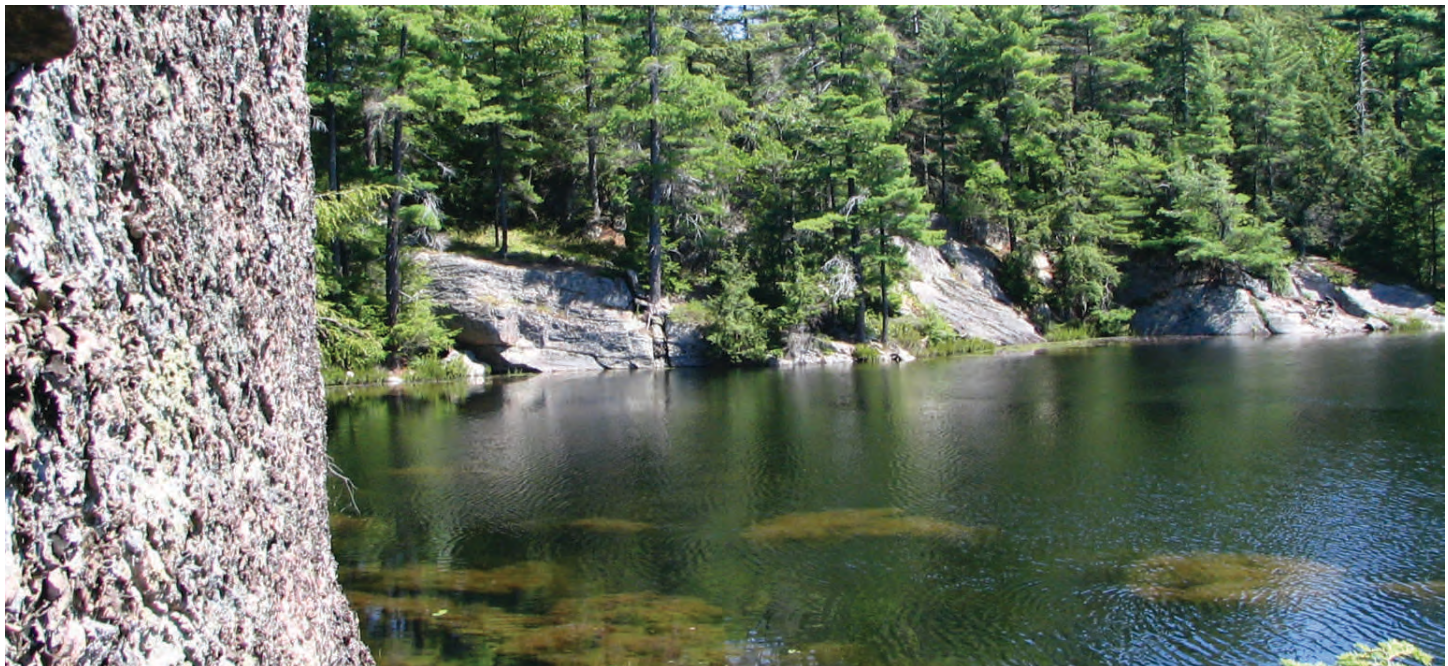
Tell your neighbours about the program or host local events within the community to inform people about the Blue Lakes program. You can also refer people to the Blue Lakes webpage at www.bluelakes.ca or call The Land Between at (705) 457-1222 if they have any questions or concerns!

E. How do I deliver the program?

The Land Between in partnership with Watersheds Canada and the Blue Lakes Pilot Team have put together a welcome kit to get people started. The kit includes everything you need to assist you with program delivery and answering any questions people may have before getting involved. Lakes can choose discrete actions or create a strategic plan. There are many ways to achieve success.

F. Who should get involved?

Landowners, lake associations, business owners, local governments or municipalities – the



Frequently Asked Questions...



that data access is restricted to your lake community. Additionally, we do not collect or maintain information on individual properties.

K. What can I do with data in the database?

Data within the database relates to your lake's scorecard, and also to lake health. Specifically fisheries, water quality and shoreline development data. Data is gleaned from historic reports, LPP, DFO/MNR and other available sources, including from participants. There is no individual property data collected or maintained. Data is there to help participants identify areas in need of attention for their lake and/or to understand general trends. Trends are limited to the amount of historical data available and to current data from participant's entries.

L. What data do I provide to the Blue Lakes Database?

Water testing programs, angler diaries, association shoreline naturalization projects, lake plan data, any available historical data, any current research, your annual score card etc.

M. Do you provide the funding for the program?

The Land Between in partnership with Watersheds Canada from time to time accesses funds and

sponsorships to support aspects of the program, including to assist landowners or lake communities with stewardship, education, and renaturalization projects.

N. Do we have to pay for the program?

As a pilot program, there is no fee for participating. However, in the future, fees for participation will be fees to the association/committee and will be nominal in order to support basic administration of the program including maintaining the database. One of the goals of the Blue Lakes program is to provide accessible education and resources to increase lake stewardship among community members and lake associations.

O. Can I use the data to project future conditions?

Blue Lakes data can be used to identify priority areas within your lake. Sufficient data is required to inform trends over time, which in turn can assist in projecting future conditions and remedies.

P. Why should the Blue Lakes program be recognized?

The Blue Lakes program is audited and maintained by a 3rd party charity, avoiding bias and partiality. In addition to increasing education and stewardship behaviours, property values can potentially

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Frequently Asked Questions...

increase as the label creates a social norm and sense of community. An outcome is that the social and environmental quality of your lake may be improved.

Q. How does the Blue Lakes program affect property values?

Multiple studies have revealed that water quality has shown to be a significant explanatory variable of lakeshore property prices. The management of lake quality is important to maintaining the natural and economic assets of the region (EPA, 2015, Maryland Counties). As the water quality of a lake increases, so does the potential for higher lakeshore property prices. The Blue Lake ecolabel creates a foundation for common goals and

therefore a culture of stewardship and caring.

R. Does the Blue Lakes program hinder economic development?

The Blue Lakes program was not created to hinder economic development, but instead to ensure growth is responsible and informed. Based on the Blue Flag Program, the Blue Lake Program bridges the gap between recreation and conservation. In fact, the Blue Lakes program can improve the profile of the lake community and enhance economic development. As an example, the worldwide Blue Flag ecolabel has increased economic revenues and health.



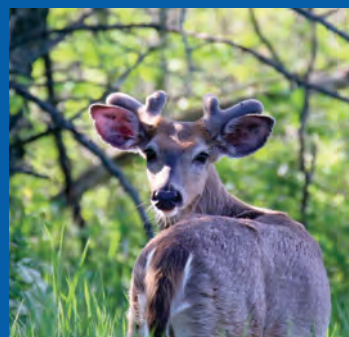
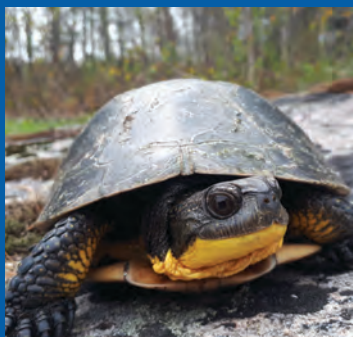
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The Land Between - The Region

The Land Between is also known as Cottage Country. It is a region that stretches across south-central Ontario from the Georgian Bay Coastline to the Ottawa Valley. The Land Between is home to more than 2400 lakes that represent the headwaters for major river systems which feed the Trent Severn Waterway flushing into the Ottawa River and into Lake Ontario. The lakes in the region also feed aquifers that provide drinking water for many major cities in southern Ontario. However, the Land Between region is also marked by the majority of rock barrens in the province, and therefore it is predominantly an area with very shallow soils that do not have the absorption capacity to buffer against pollution. Residential lakeshore development is the major source of pollution affecting these fragile and interconnected water resources.

The Land Between is also an ecotone; an ecological term to describe a meeting place between ecoregions. The Land Between is an ecotone or meeting place between the Canadian Shield and St. Lawrence Lowlands. Ecotones are known for their biodiversity because found within them are species from each bordering region. Therefore, found within the Land Between region are species from both northern and southern parts of Ontario, such as the blueberry and strawberry, black spruce and green ash, black fly and mosquito (underpinnings of major food webs), raven and the crow, river otter and woodchuck, moose and deer. But the Land Between region is more than an ecotone, because of its unique physiographic features it is also its own unique landscape. With more rock outcrops and small lakes than anywhere in the province, the Land Between attracts unique species of reptiles who love to bask and swim, such as turtles: The region has more turtles than anywhere in the province. Also, the region attracts other unique species that like to live in alvar or rock barren communities or near shorelands such as Eastern Hognosed Snakes (innocuous and gentle pretenders), Common Nighthawks that love to eat mosquitoes, Kingfishers and Ospreys (handsome anglers), or Five-lined Skinks (Ontario's only lizard that lives in leafy areas next to shores).



The Land Between - The Region...

And because of the Land Between's unique position in Ontario and between regions, but also because it is still primarily intact with more than 80% natural cover (2010), the region is actually the last wilderness or uninterrupted natural landscape in southern Ontario. It is therefore, also the last stronghold for many of Ontario's wildlife species. More, the Land Between has the final reserves of habitats, biodiversity and corresponding ecosystem services which support all peoples locally and within the cities found to the south. This means the Land Between has pollinators to help our food grow, breeding birds that rid forests of pests and which spread seeds to ensure biodiversity persist, and wetlands to clean and filter waters.

However, development in the region is on the rise. Shorelines, which are effectively ecotones within this larger regional ecotone, are a meeting place between upland and lowland. Therefore, shorelines naturally are the most biodiverse areas within a lake, supporting both upland and aquatic wildlife, diversity and ecosystem health. However, shorelands are the most developed areas. Changes to these habitats are affecting entire lakes and collectively the larger region.

The Blue Lakes program was founded within the Land Between bioregion, by the Land Between charity, to find adaptive solutions to ensure this invaluable region and irreplaceable lake ecosystems remain healthy for all people and all wildlife, and therefore for future generations.



The Land Between Charity. Founder of Blue Lakes



The Land Between is a grassroots, non-government charity that was made by common people for common people. It is an award winning national charity that is dedicated to the conservation of Cottage Country.

The Land Between works to research, conserve and enhance all of the natural, cultural and also social-economic features of the region.

The Land Between collaborates with people, groups, organizations and governments across different sectors and at all levels. The charity seeks to engage people and communities in active conservation, and to honor community traditions while finding innovative approaches that are effective!

To contact The Land Between or find out more about The Blue Lakes Program:

The Land Between charity
Charity number: 805 849 916 RR0001
P.O. Box 1368, Haliburton, ON, K0M 1S0
Field Office: 6712 Gelert Road, Portable Building, Haliburton
www.thelandbetween.ca www.bluelakes.ca
bluelakes@thelandbetween.ca
705-457-1222



Watersheds Canada has been working with a diversity of landowners, communities and organizations since 2002 to keep our freshwater healthy, beautiful and available for generations to come.

We work with landowners, communities, and organizations to protect lakes and rivers through developing effective, transferable, long-term solutions.

We love what we do, and we give it 100% each and every day.

Watersheds Canada
115-40 Sunset Boulevard,
Perth, Ontario K7H 2Y4



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 Relève du gouvernement de l'Ontario.

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