

ROAD SALT PUTS LAKE HEALTH AT RISK

Although necessary for safety reasons, the use of large quantities of salt on the roads has harmful effects on the environment. The salt seeps into the ground and then runs off towards the lakes and waterways. These effects are especially important in the context of climate change where we are witnessing more frequent and extreme events of mild weather in winter leading to almost continuous leaching of salts into the lakes and waterways.

THE EFFECTS ON THE LAKE ENVIRONMENT CAN BE DIVERSE, SUCH AS:

- Premature aging of the lake
- Disruption of the normal cycle of mixing and oxygenation of water
- Effects on aquatic species, especially the small species that are a food source for fish and frogs' eggs that are especially vulnerable to high chloride levels
- Dieback of roadside trees
- Eurasian water-milfoil, the most invasive aquatic plant, is more tolerant of high chloride levels than native plants – increasing chloride levels could be helpful to their growth

The CRE Laurentides study of Laurentian lakes showed that lakes with high chloride levels were more vulnerable to the invasion of Eurasian water-milfoil.

GORE

Aware of the threat posed by the application of these salts, the Municipality of Gore has adopted the initiative of Eco-Roads. Certain streets have an alternate maintenance method in order to reduce the impact of road salts on the environment. For instance abrasives such as sand and small stones are used.

MILLE-ISLES – Lake Hughes (Ch Lac Hughes)

The very steep hill at the Guardrail is very close to the lake and is a particularly vulnerable area. The huge quantities of road sand-salt run-off has been witnessed for many years. The sand accumulating as sediment in the lake and now we know that the de-icing salt can significantly increase the chloride concentration, to the point of presenting risks of serious damage to the environment.

On several occasions, the Municipality of Mille-Isles has been contacted about early clean-up at this area in order to prevent some of the run-off. Although a clean-up has been done annually, last year (2023), the enormous quantity of sand left behind has been very concerning. The Director-General, Gabriel Therrien, was informed about our concern at a meeting in March 2024.

WATER TESTING for chlorides

Chlorides have been measured three times every summer since 2019, as part of the regular RSVL water testing program. The measurements so far have been within normal limits but are rising.