

Pollution prevention, also known as P2, occurs when people change their plans, practices, or habits in order to reduce the generation of pollution and waste at the source, instead of trying to clean them up after the fact. P2 also includes activities that protect natural resources (i.e., land, water, air, plants, wildlife, and aquatic species) through conservation or more efficient use of resources.

The key to environmental sustainability is thinking globally and acting locally. P2 is about making smart choices — both in what we buy and in how we use the products. It involves looking at the causes of waste and pollution and figuring out how to prevent them.

P2 & You @ the COTTAGE

Few people have a better opportunity to observe the effects of human activities and pollution on the wilderness than cottagers, many of whom return each year to the same location and whose knowledge of the local area may have been passed down by previous generations. With over half a million cottages across Canada, cottagers, as a group, can have quite a positive or negative impact on the environment.

It is just as important to practise environmentally responsible behaviour at the cottage as it is at home. Because cottages are usually located on the banks of rivers or on the shores of lakes or oceans, it is especially important that we protect those waters and surrounding land.

Here are a few ways in which you can practise P2 while at the cottage:

Reduce waste

- Use reusable plates, cups, and cutlery instead of disposable items.
- Repair or refurbish old or malfunctioning items, or, if replacing items still in good working condition, donate to local area charities.
- Bring all recyclables back to the city if no recycling facility is available nearby. Bring only what you need in reusable containers.
- Start a compost pile.
- Organize a "reuse it" program to share unwanted items that are still in good condition if one doesn't exist near your cottage.

Save energy

- Paddle a canoe or kayak, row a boat, or sail a windsurfer or sailboat instead of using a powerboat to travel on the lake or river.
- Save electricity by turning off lights and other electrical equipment when you leave the cottage after a visit, and shut down the system, if possible, at the end of the season.
- Use fluorescent lighting or long-life bulbs instead of incandescent lights to save on replacement costs and energy bills.
- Purchase equipment with automatic power-saving devices.
- Use solar energy panels, if possible.
- Replace your old "airtight" and "potbellied" woodstove with a safer, more efficient, and less

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polluting U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA)-approved woodstove.

- Buy four-stroke engines if purchasing an off-road vehicle or outboard motor.

Save water

- Ensure that taps are turned off tightly.
- Repair any leaks (from toilet tanks and faucets) immediately.
- Replace old equipment with water-efficient fixtures, and install low-flow attachments on faucets.
- Do not bathe in freshwater systems.

Promote environmental thinking

- Use ethanol-blended gasoline in your vehicle.
- Promote the P2 concept (i.e., through projects, letters, papers) to other cottagers and the local community.
- Plan environmental education events, and share your knowledge.
- Do not use chemical septic tank products.
- Use environmentally safe cleaning products displaying the EcoLogo symbol (www.environmentalchoice.ca).
- Participate in or organize litter cleanup campaigns.
- Use detergents and soaps with no phosphate or low phosphate levels. Dishwashing soaps tend to have high phosphate contents — use half the recommended amount, or try to find a product that is environmentally safe.
- Allow native species of plants to thrive, and give yourself more time to enjoy and appreciate the surrounding nature. Do not use fertilizers, pesticides, or herbicides at the cottage.
- Respect local wildlife by being careful not to disturb them — identify the different species of birds, animals, plants, and insects, and keep a log for future reference. Participate in annual wildlife-watching activities relating to frog and bird species (www.wildspace.ec.gc.ca and www.birdsource.org/gbbc).
- Allow native vegetation to grow and mature along shorelines to reduce erosion. Avoid changing wetlands or altering shorelines.
- Do not allow dogs to run at large or chase wildlife.
- Ensure that all permits are approved prior to any work being done.

Septic systems

- Consider buying a biological toilet instead of a septic tank system. Biological toilets are simple to use and produce no harmful residue or sludge.
- Ensure that leaking or failing septic systems are serviced immediately to minimize leaching of nutrients into nearby water. Never pour

antibiotics or household chemical products down the toilet or drains, as these may destroy the bacteria in the septic system that break down the waste.

- Avoid overloading the septic system by washing laundry in small batches.
- Know the location of all the components of the septic system, and ensure that heavy vehicles are kept away.
- Never plant shrubs or trees near the septic system.
- Check your system annually, have a reputable contractor remove sludge and scum every three to five years, and document all service and pump-outs.

Wood heating

- Learn to "Burn it Smart!"
- Replace an old, inefficient woodstove with a new, high-efficiency, low-emission USEPA-certified model. You can reduce wood smoke by up to 90%.
- Burn only dry, seasoned wood — do not burn green, wet, treated, or painted wood, particleboard, or plywood.
- Never burn garbage, plastics, cardboard, or styrofoam. Burning garbage releases many toxins and poisons.
- Store wood outside, off the ground, and covered.
- Have the woodstove installed by a professional designated by the Wood Energy Technical Training (WETT) Program.
- Have your woodstove inspected and cleaned once a year.
- Visit www.burnitsmart.org for more information.

Want to know more?

Visit the Canadian Pollution Prevention Information Clearinghouse at www.ec.gc.ca/cppic for additional sources of P2 information covering a wide variety of topics.

For further information, please contact:

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