

Photo: Iryna Tolmachova

# Salting our freshwater ecosystems: Understanding consequences of road salt use in Canadian watersheds

## IMPACTS OF ROAD (OR ROCK) SALT

### Aquatic Ecosystems

- Increasing saltiness of freshwater lakes, rivers, and wetlands and groundwater
- Changes in turnover dynamics in lakes
- High chloride concentrations affecting fish growth and egg production
- Multi-level effects from increased stress on ecosystems at the organism, population, and community level

### Terrestrial Ecosystems

- Animals are attracted to roadways causing an increased risk of collisions
- Birds consume small grains of salt in roadways which can become toxic
- Plants and vegetation can be damaged or have reduced growth

### Infrastructure & Property

- Corrosion and damage to personal property such as cars, shoes, and flooring
- Risk of drinking water contamination and change in the taste of water



## HOW YOU CAN HELP

- Talk about salt and take local action
- Shovel your property before applying salt
- Sweep up excess salt, especially before it rains
- Check weather conditions - only apply salt up to the temperature it will be effective to
- Use the right amount of salt, about one pill bottle per square metre
- Use traction aids like sand or ash
- Divert your downspouts to a garden or lawn
- Have discussions with businesses that over salt

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Learn more about current scientific research around the impact of road salt on [freshwater species](#), [birds](#), [people](#), and [lakes and rivers](#)
- Find out how salt works and actions you can take to lower your impact using the [Salt Smart Collaborative's resources and videos](#)
- Read the '[Code of Practice for the Environmental Management of Road Salts](#)'
- Read model frameworks and best practices: '[Smart about Salt](#)' program', or '[Green SnowPro Certification](#)'
- Visit the [Water Rangers website](#) to learn more about their water quality test kits and open data platform that helps anyone collect water quality data for fresh and ocean water areas

Join the free Freshwater Stewardship Community!  
[watersheds.ca/freshwater-stewardship](http://watersheds.ca/freshwater-stewardship)

Handout created by:



Funding support:

Peterborough K.M Hunter Charitable Foundation  
 S.M. Blair Family Foundation