

Lower DuPage River Watershed Coalition

Summer Public Education and Outreach Campaign Toolkit

ABOUT THIS TOOLKIT

The communications tools and messages included in this toolkit were developed by Bluestem Communications for the Lower DuPage River Watershed Coalition during Summer 2017. The content is derived from public opinion research that was conducted in the watershed in 2016, as well as input provided during Coalition meetings.



This campaign is designed to be implemented during the summer months (June-September). A suggested timeline to implement this campaign is included. The campaign can be implemented in its entirety following the schedule provided, or as-needed. Each community can implement the campaign as they see fit; the plan is only a recommendation.

The **Communications Tools** included in this toolkit provide sample language that can be used exactly as it appears, or can be edited to fit community needs. These tools are designed to make it as easy as possible for all participating communities to engage their citizens on this topic.

The Coalition decided the summer Public Education and Outreach Campaign would target proper maintenance of stormwater ponds managed by Homeowners' Associations (HOAs). This campaign is audience-specific. Outreach is focused on residents living within HOA-managed subdivisions and HOA presidents and boards, where applicable. Educating HOAs about their responsibility to maintain stormwater ponds and how to do so will help ensure that these important components of stormwater infrastructure function properly.

The following tools are included in this Toolkit:

- Mailed letter and/or email
- City website text
- Talking points
- Maintenance checklist and door-hanger text
- Presentation Slides

City and Town Communications

LETTER/EMAIL

Audience: HOA board/president

How to use: An email or letter is sent to HOA board/ president within the city or town explaining that poorly maintained detention ponds are unsightly and create a variety of stormwater management issues. Reminds them to properly maintain their pond(s), includes a checklist and contact information.

Dear [Name],

This summer, [town] is reminding Homeowners' Associations about their subdivision's stormwater pond maintenance responsibilities. These ponds are an important part of our region's stormwater management infrastructure, provide flood control in your neighborhood and help protect water quality. While these ponds reduce the rate and volume of stormwater entering our storm sewer system, they also help prevent polluted runoff from reaching local rivers.

When rain falls on undeveloped areas, water can be absorbed into the ground and filtered by soil and plants. But, when rain falls on impervious surfaces such as roofs, streets, and parking lots, the water cannot soak into the ground. Instead, it makes its way to the nearby rivers and streams through our storm sewer system, carrying fertilizer and other pollution with it. Stormwater ponds collect that stormwater, keeping away from our streets and homes. They also help improve the quality of water that is released to our local rivers after a storm by providing time for pollutants and sediment to settle to the bottom of the pond.

When properly maintained, stormwater ponds can provide function *and* beauty to your neighborhood. Unfortunately, some HOAs in [town] are not conducting regular, proper maintenance. When stormwater ponds are neglected, they become unsightly, which can affect property values. Even worse, without maintenance they also don't function as they should.

Common problems caused by a lack of proper maintenance to your stormwater pond:

- Flooding caused by trash, debris and/or sediment accumulation blocking inlet and outlet pipes.
- Ugly algae blooms caused by using excessive fertilizer adjacent to the pond.
- Costly structural repairs caused by erosion due to a lack of appropriate vegetation on the shoreline.

Don't be ashamed of your ponds! Take the initiative to properly care for your subdivision's stormwater ponds and make your neighborhood a better place to live. Proper care and maintenance of these stormwater structures help ensure they will function as they should when you need them and also protects local water quality. Included you will find an inspection checklist to help you develop a maintenance plan. For more information, please visit [website]. If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to contact me at [contact info].

Sincerely,

[Municipal Contact Name]

WEBSITE TEXT

Audience: HOA board/president and residents

How to use: Text for a village webpage. Can be referenced in other materials, including emails, letters and other deliverables. Webpage explains how stormwater ponds work, why they're important and how to properly maintain them. Features a link to download the maintenance checklist and contact info.

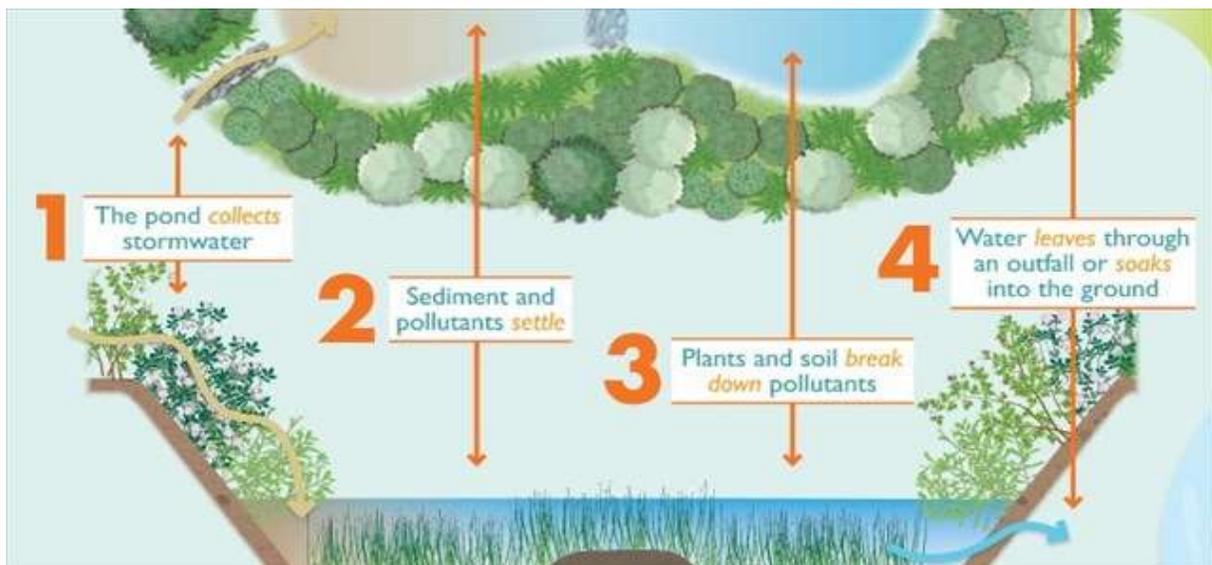
Did you know that Homeowners' Associations are responsible for maintaining their stormwater ponds?

Stormwater ponds can be functional *and* beautiful assets in your community. They help retain stormwater after major storms and prevent polluted runoff from reaching local rivers. Unfortunately, many HOAs don't know it's their responsibility to maintain them. If not properly cared for, these ponds can become liabilities instead of assets.



What is a stormwater pond?

Stormwater ponds are large, permanent stormwater structures that simulate the natural water cycle. They provide the capacity to store stormwater, keeping it away from our streets and homes, during storm events. The water is then slowly released, usually through an outlet structure that leads to a nearby creek or storm sewer. If the stormwater pond has no outlet structure, the excess water infiltrates into the ground or evaporates.



Why are stormwater ponds important?

Stormwater ponds reduce the volume and rate at which stormwater rushes into our storm sewers and rivers during a storm. This helps prevent localized flooding and downstream impacts. They also keep pollutants and sediment out of our local rivers by allowing them to settle to the bottom of the pond

How do you maintain a stormwater pond?

Be proud of your pond! When stormwater ponds are neglected, they become unsightly and don't function as they should. Proper care and maintenance of these structures can improve neighborhood stormwater management and local water quality. Please take the following actions to ensure that your stormwater pond remains healthy and helpful:

- Inspect your stormwater pond monthly. Note areas and severity of shoreline erosion and remove any foreign objects (i.e. trash, leaves) blocking inlet pipes or outlet structures.
- Contract a professional engineer to inspect your stormwater pond every one or two years. Hire a qualified contractor to perform recommended actions to ensure your pond continues to function properly.
- Discontinue application of fertilizers and pesticides around your stormwater pond. An optimal "buffer zone" width is 20' but a commitment to discontinue use at any width is helpful.
- Consider converting the turf grass surrounding your pond to a native plant buffer zone. Work with a qualified landscape contractor to incorporate native plants to help stabilize shorelines and deter geese.
- If vegetation around your stormwater pond is over 4' tall, you may need professional services to remove and treat for invasive species (i.e. reed canary grass and phragmites). For a free site visit, contact Jamie Viebach with The Conservation Foundation at jviebach@theconservationfoundation.org or 630-428-4500 X128.

Download this checklist [[link](#)] to help track which tasks and when you complete them. Contact [[municipal contact name](#)] at [[contact info](#)] for more information.

HOA TALKING POINTS

Audience: HOA board/president

How to use: For village/town staff when speaking with HOA board/president on the phone or in-person.

- Homeowners' Associations are responsible for maintaining their stormwater ponds. These ponds are important to control localized flooding and improve water quality.
- If you were unaware of your responsibilities, we're here to help you get started!
- Stormwater ponds are large, permanent stormwater structures that provide the capacity to store stormwater, keeping the water away from our streets and homes, during storms. These ponds reduce the volume and rate at which stormwater rushes into our sewers and rivers. They also allow pollutants and sediment to settle to the bottom of the pond before the water infiltrates or drains to a local river.
- Proper care and maintenance of these structures can improve neighborhood stormwater management and local water quality. These ponds don't have to be boring, either! Pretty

native plants can deter geese, prevent shoreline erosion and attract butterflies and birds to your neighborhood.

- We have a maintenance checklist to help you keep track of your efforts.
- There are negative consequences if your stormwater pond is not properly maintained.

HOA RESIDENT TALKING POINTS

Audience: HOA residents

How to use: For village/town staff when speaking with residents who are concerned about the maintenance of a nearby detention pond.

- Homeowners' Associations are responsible for maintaining their stormwater ponds. Unfortunately, some HOAs are not aware of these responsibilities.
- Stormwater ponds help retain stormwater during major storms and prevent polluted runoff from reaching our rivers.
- When stormwater ponds are neglected, they don't function as they should and become a liability. For example, when trash and debris block pipes, this can cause localized flooding.
- When properly maintained, detention ponds can be functional *and* beautiful. Native plants help prevent shoreline erosion, deter geese and attract butterflies and birds.
- Speak to your HOA president about your stormwater pond maintenance plan. If there is no plan, ask the president to visit this website [site] or contact [municipal contact] for information on stormwater pond maintenance to share with the HOA.

Deliverables

MAINTENANCE CHECKLIST

Audience: HOA board/president

How to use: A checklist for HOAs. It can be printed and distributed to HOA presidents during in-person meetings or mailed with the letter. Can also be available online as a downloadable file.

HOA STORMWATER POND MAINTENANCE CHECKLIST Track maintenance on your stormwater pond with this checklist. This checklist is good for one full year. For additional copies, download this file at [link]. YEAR: _____			
TASK	FREQUENCY	DATE(S)	NOTES
Inspect your stormwater pond monthly. Note areas with shoreline erosion and remove any trash, debris or sediment blocking inlet pipes or outlet structures.	Monthly and after storms that fill up your pond(s)		
Schedule a professional engineer to inspect your pond.	Annually		
Install native plants along the banks and in the pond	Annually		
Enforce a 20' natural "safe zone" around the edge of the pond, where no pesticide or fertilizer use is allowed	Annually		
If vegetation around your stormwater pond is over 4' tall, hire professional services to remove and treat for invasive species	As-needed		
Update residents on maintenance and repair of the detention pond(s)	Annually		

INSPECTION CHECKLIST

Audience: HOA managers

How to use: A checklist for HOA managers during their monthly inspections. Provided in a packet with the maintenance plan and images/diagrams of vegetation, pond structure and pond examples. It can be printed and distributed to HOA managers during in-person meetings or mailed with the letter and given to them by the HOA president. Can also be available online as a downloadable file.

STORMWATER POND INSPECTION			
Use this checklist for your monthly inspections. Inspect vegetation conditions, shoreline erosion and the inlet/outlet structures. Make note of any improvements that need to be made.			
Pond Location: (cross street, description, etc.)			
Vegetation			
Shoreline vegetation	In-pond vegetation	“Safe zone” width (ft)	Notes
<input type="checkbox"/> Turf grass <input type="checkbox"/> Native plants <input type="checkbox"/> Invasive plants <input type="checkbox"/> Rip-rap <input type="checkbox"/> Seawall	<input type="checkbox"/> Turf grass (bottom) <input type="checkbox"/> Native/wetland plants <input type="checkbox"/> Submerged plants <input type="checkbox"/> Floating plants <input type="checkbox"/> Invasive plants <input type="checkbox"/> N/A		
		Plant height	
Shoreline		Inlet/Outlet Structures	
Erosion	Notes	Obstruction	Notes
<input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> Slight <input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/> Minimal <input type="checkbox"/> Moderate		<input type="checkbox"/> Trash/debris <input type="checkbox"/> Sediment <input type="checkbox"/> None	
Overall water quality benefits		<input type="checkbox"/> Poor	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair
		<input type="checkbox"/> Good	
Repair opportunities/future maintenance:			

DOOR-HANGER TEXT

Audience: HOA residents

How to use: Distributed to residents living within the HOA. Explains that stormwater ponds are the HOA's responsibility and list consequences if not properly maintained. Asks residents to contact their HOA board/president to ensure the association has a stormwater pond maintenance plan and follows it.

BE PROUD OF YOUR PONDS!

Did you know?

Homeowners' Associations are responsible for maintaining their stormwater ponds - your neighborhood has at least one stormwater pond!

These ponds are important for stormwater management and water quality. They help retain stormwater during storms and prevent polluted runoff from reaching local rivers.

Stormwater ponds can be functional *and* beautiful.

Sometimes HOAs are not aware of their responsibility to maintain them. These neglected ponds become unsightly, full of garbage, algae and silt. When detention ponds are neglected, they don't function as they should. Clogged pipes can contribute to localized flooding and eroded shorelines can lead to pond function failure.

Be proud of your pond!

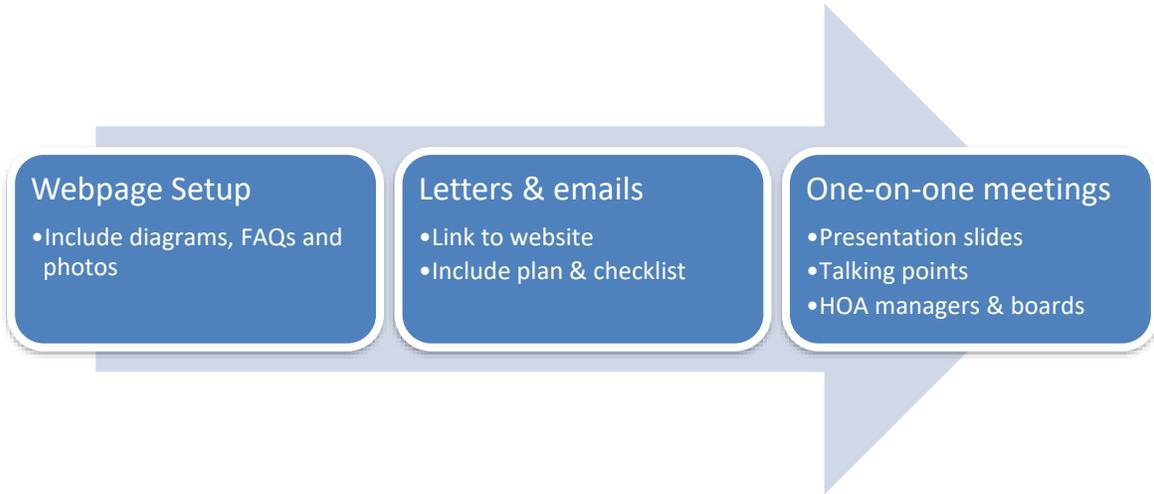
You shouldn't be ashamed of your ponds. Proper care and maintenance of these structures can improve neighborhood stormwater management and protect local water quality. These ponds don't have to be boring either. Install native plants to help prevent shoreline erosion, deter geese and provide natural habitat for butterflies and birds.

Help bring your pond back to life! Contact your Homeowners' Association and ask about your stormwater pond maintenance plan. For a free site visit, contact Jamie Viebach with The Conservation Foundation at jviebach@theconservationfoundation.org.

For more information, visit [[website](#)] or contact [[municipal contact name](#)] at [[contact info](#)]

Sample Implementation Plan

Year 1



Year 2



Lower DuPage River Watershed Coalition

Inspection Checklist

Stormwater Pond Inspection

Use this checklist for your monthly inspections. Make sure to inspect vegetation conditions, shoreline erosion and the inlet/outlet structures. Take note of any improvements that need to be made.

Pond Location

(cross street, description, etc.) _____

1. VEGETATION			
Shoreline vegetation	In-pond vegetation	"Safe zone" width (ft)	Notes
<input type="checkbox"/> Turf grass <input type="checkbox"/> Invasive plants <input type="checkbox"/> Seawall <input type="checkbox"/> Native plants <input type="checkbox"/> Rip-rap	<input type="checkbox"/> Turf grass (bottom) <input type="checkbox"/> Native/wetland plants <input type="checkbox"/> Submerged plants <input type="checkbox"/> Floating plants <input type="checkbox"/> Invasives <input type="checkbox"/> N/A	 Plant height	
2. SHORELINE		3. INLET/OUTLET STRUCTURES	
Erosion	Notes	Obstruction	Notes
<input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> Slight <input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/> Minimal <input type="checkbox"/> Moderate		<input type="checkbox"/> Trash/debris <input type="checkbox"/> Sediment <input type="checkbox"/> None	
4. Overall water quality benefits: <input type="checkbox"/> Poor <input type="checkbox"/> Fair <input type="checkbox"/> Good			
Repair opportunities/future maintenance:			



Lower DuPage River Watershed Coalition

Maintenance Checklist

HOA Stormwater Pond Maintenance

Track the work you get done on your stormwater pond with this checklist. This checklist is good for one full year. For additional copies, download this file at [\[link\]](#).

YEAR: _____

TASK	FREQUENCY	DATE(S)	NOTES
1. Inspect your stormwater pond monthly. Note areas with shoreline erosion and remove any trash, debris or sediment blocking inlet pipes or outlet structures.	Monthly and after storms that fill up your pond(s)		
2. Schedule a professional engineer to inspect your pond.	Annually		
3. Install native plants along the banks and in the pond	Annually		
4. Enforce a 20' natural "safe zone" around the edge of the pond, where no pesticide or fertilizer use is allowed	Annually		
5. If vegetation around your stormwater pond is over 4' tall, hire professional services to remove and treat for invasive species	As-needed		
6. Update residents on maintenance and repair of the detention pond(s)	Annually		



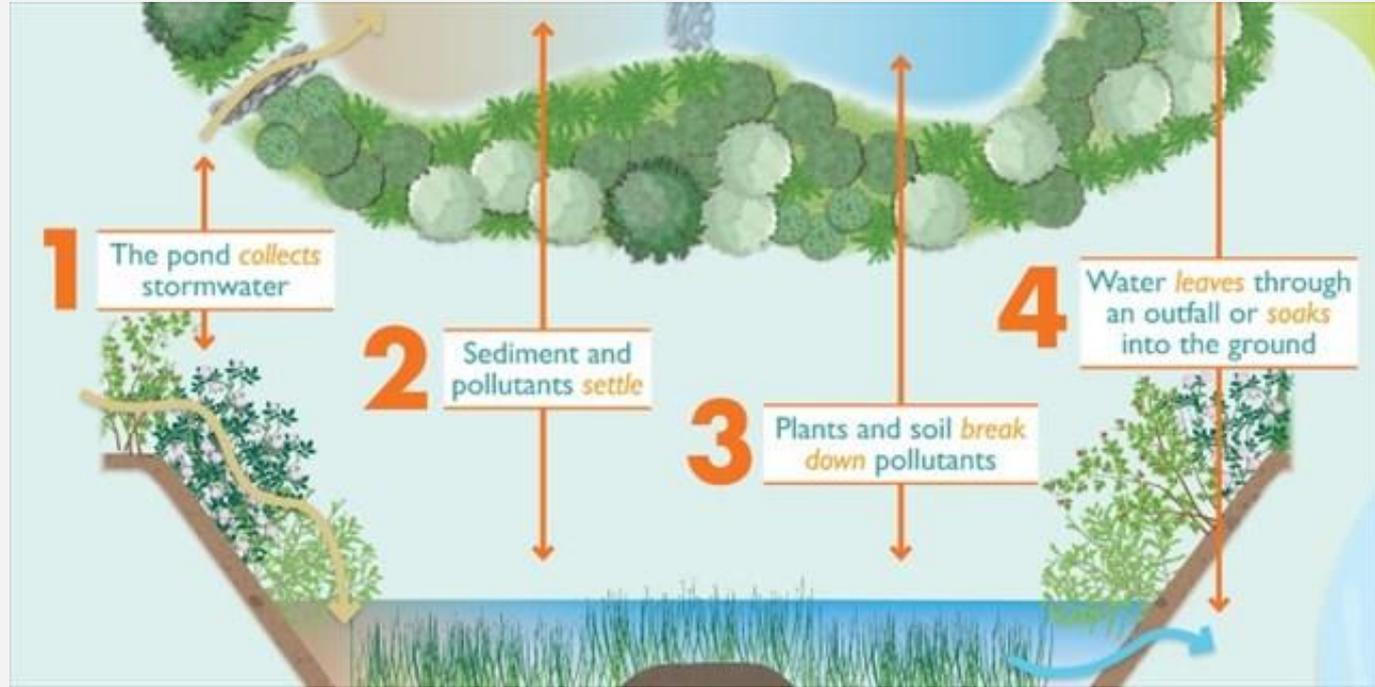


Be proud of your pond!

Stormwater pond maintenance for HOAs

HOAs are responsible for maintaining their stormwater ponds...

but what exactly are stormwater ponds?



Permanent stormwater structures that simulate the natural water cycle

Stormwater ponds...

Keep stormwater from collecting in our streets and near our homes

Improve water quality

Can be beautiful assets for your community

(you're also legally responsible for them)



Maintenance

Lower DuPage River Watershed Coalition

Maintenance Checklist

HOA Stormwater Pond Maintenance

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YEAR: _____

	TASK	FREQUENCY	DATE(S)	NOTES
1.	Inspect your stormwater pond monthly. Note areas with shoreline erosion and remove any trash, debris or sediment blocking inlet pipes or outlet structures.	Monthly and after storm events that fill up your pond(s)		
2.	Schedule a professional engineer to inspect your pond.	Annually		
3.	Install permanent native plants along the banks and in the pond	Annually		
4.	Enforce a 20' natural "safe zone" around the edge of the pond, where no mowing or fertilizer use is allowed	Annually		
5.	If vegetation around your stormwater pond is over 4' tall, hire professional services to remove and treat for invasive species	As-needed		
6.	Update residents on maintenance and repair of the detention pond(s)	Annually		



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Inspection Checklist

Stormwater Pond Inspection

Use this checklist for your monthly inspections. Make sure to inspect vegetation conditions, shoreline erosion and the inlet/outlet structures. Take note of any improvements that need to be made.

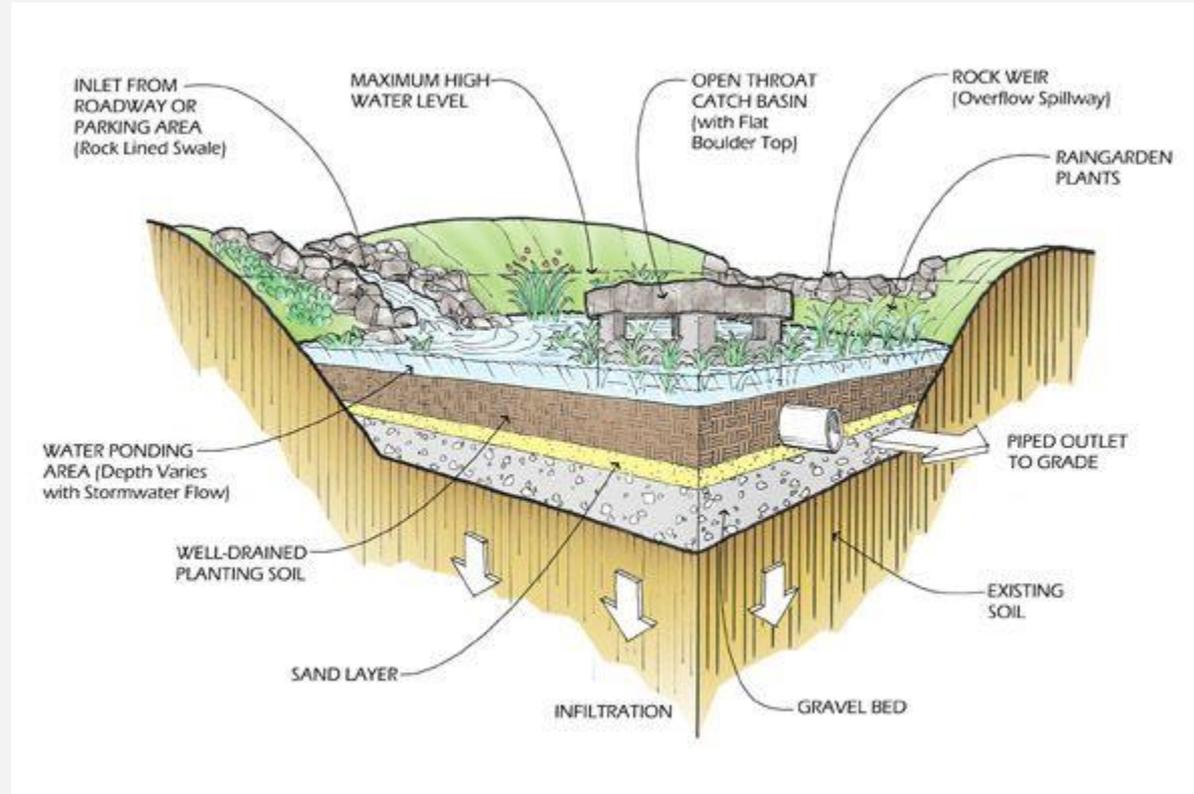
Pond Location
(cross street, description, etc.) _____

1. VEGETATION			
Shoreline vegetation	In-pond vegetation	"Safe zone" width (ft)	Notes
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Erosion	Notes	Obstruction	Notes
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4. Overall water quality benefits: <input type="checkbox"/> Poor <input type="checkbox"/> Fair <input type="checkbox"/> Good			
Repair opportunities/future maintenance:			



Inlet & outlet pipes

No debris, trash or sediment blocking the pipes



The shoreline

Check for erosion

Property owners often think turf grass or rip rap will be good enough

Incorporate native plants to help prevent shoreline erosion



VS



For more information:

[Municipal Contact info]

[Webpage link]

Or contact Jamie Viebach with The Conservation Foundation for a site visit:
jviebach@theconservationfoundation.org or 630.428.4500 X128.