

Pollution compromises water bodies

Vermonters rely on a network of rivers, streams and lakes for drinking water, economy-boosting tourism and recreation dollars, and as habitat for the state's plant and animal life. Almost without exception, the state's water bodies have been compromised by pollution. Due to the grade of surrounding mountains, Lake Champlain has a naturally short watershed making it especially vulnerable to pollutants.

the FACTS

- Vermont has the lowest level of toxic releases per capita and the country's 10th lowest number of toxic waste sites. Despite this ranking, the state is home to more than 3,000 hazardous waste sites and 1,500 sites containing MTBE, a gasoline additive known to contaminate water supplies.¹³⁶
- Pollution has had a dramatic and long-term impact on Lake Champlain, a source of drinking water for 200,000 people and 40% of all tourism dollars in the Champlain Valley Basin. High bacteria levels, caused largely by farming runoff, have led to beach closings. Contaminants from automobiles and other sources concentrate on paved surfaces and run off as phosphorous pollution that has stimulated toxic algae growth in the lake.¹³⁷
- None of the state's rivers or lakes can fully support all official designated uses including swimming, drinking, recreation, wildlife habitat, and fish consumption.¹³⁸ According to the Environmental Protection Agency, Vermont ranks seventh in the country for the cleanliness of its rivers and streams. Yet mercury pollution has restricted consumption of fish from all Vermont lakes, rivers and streams.
- The Connecticut River Watershed separating Vermont from New Hampshire is threatened by toxins from storm water, loss and fragmentation of habitat, invasive species, mercury contamination from air pollution, and hydroelectric damming. Though this watershed remains challenged, recent cleanup and restriction efforts have produced promising results.¹³⁹

VALUED RESOURCE



200,000

**people depend on Lake Champlain
as a source of drinking water.**