



No Time To Waste

On Friday, Lake Agawam Conservancy's Science Advisor, Dr. Chris Gobler spoke to a packed auditorium at Stony Brook Southampton campus about a serious problem we can fix: our water quality. Last week's dramatic media coverage of the *Vibrio vulnificus* bacterium in local waters was largely sensationalized (more on that later in this letter), but the press has drawn attention to a critical issue: the high levels of nitrogen in Suffolk County's water pose a public health threat. We have too much nitrogen in our drinking, swimming and fishing waters because our septic systems are antiquated and we use nitrogen-laden lawn chemicals. At Lake Agawam Conservancy, we have been working on ways to help our community reverse this threat with simple steps, but more of us need to take them.

The Dangers of Nitrogen

Nitrogen feeds all sorts of bad things, from bacteria like *Vibrio vulnificus* in freshwater ponds to harmful algal blooms (HABS) in Lake Agawam that release *microcystin* toxin. Nitrogen wreaks havoc on ecosystems by depriving water of oxygen. Epidemiological studies link high levels of nitrogen in drinking water to cancer and birth defects. Suffolk County's levels are among the highest in the United States. This is mainly

there is significant evidence that sewage treatment in areas that were loaded with HABs or *Vibrio vulnificus* gets rid of these problems.

1. Upgrade to a Low Nitrogen Septic System

The first step of the solution is to install a new advanced innovative septic system using the \$65,000 in rebate money available to every homeowner in the Towns of Southampton and East Hampton. You can apply for the rebates and begin work once you receive the funds. Please contact us for help with the paperwork.

2. Support a Wastewater Treatment Plant

Please support efforts to install a centralized sewage treatment facility in Southampton. After an exhaustive, decades-long search, the Village finally has an opportunity to build a clean water facility on the parcel where the Police Station and Ambulance Barn are located. The existing dog park everyone knows and loves that has been on this municipal property can be moved to the nearby Southampton Press site at 135 Windmill Lane, directly adjacent to Rogers Memorial Library. This property will be purchased by the Community Preservation Fund program for parkland preservation for this purpose.

[See More on Village Plan](#)

3. Eliminate Landscape Chemicals

Landscape chemicals are easy to reduce. Just eliminate them. Fertilizer is unnecessary! Pesticides are harmful to every species, not just ticks. Your lawn, your garden and your family will all be healthier without them.



We drink and swim in our landscape chemicals and are exposed to the harmful effects of untreated sewage. Every individual has control over how much nitrogen they put into our ground and surface waters. Upgrade to a low nitrogen septic system, eliminate synthetic fertilizer and pesticides and support local efforts to sewer your community.

Tom Varley from the Center for Clean Water Technology will help you with paperwork for your new septic system and Tony Piazza of Whitmore's will consult with you on how to stop using lawn chemicals. **Both consultations are free of charge.**

Email info@lakeagawam.org for more information and check out this link: <https://southamptontownny.gov/1083/IA-OWTS-Rebate-Program>

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OUR EFFORTS & MISSION



*Permeable Reactive Barrier Injection Wells
in Lake Agawam Park*

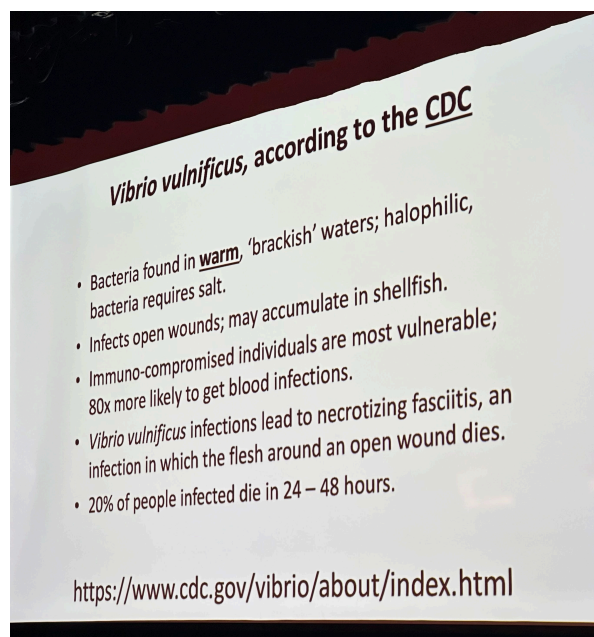
At Lake Agawam Conservancy, we are constantly working on ways to reduce the nitrogen that gets into our groundwater. This spring we are planting bioswales throughout Southampton and installing a permeable reactive barrier along the north end of the lake to capture road runoff and sewage from the business district.

Lake Agawam Conservancy

Finally, we would like to reassure fears about the flesh-eating *Vibrio vulnificus* bacteria that got so much attention last week. With three fatalities in the past three years from this bacterium, *that represents a one in ten million risk*. Open wounds are a point of entry for any bacteria, so covering them or staying out of water when you have an open wound reduces risk.

Immunocompromised people are the most vulnerable as they are more susceptible to blood infections. This bacterium needs brackish water and is therefore very rare in freshwater lakes like Lake Agawam and in the salty ocean water. Dr. Chris Gobler swims all the time unless he has an open cut or after heavy rainfall.

Our mission is to restore our waters for everyone's health and enjoyment. Join us!



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