

# Worksheet #1 - Getting to Know Your Property

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## *Why should you be concerned?*

- In “cottage country”, you are your own WATER QUALITY STEWARD!
- Upstream practices WILL affect your property.
- Provincial regulations and municipal bylaws are designed to protect our shorelines and waterways, and these may restrict how you may use your property.
- A property’s soil and landforms can influence water quality. Your development and use can also affect the environmental quality of your property, which may impact your enjoyment of it.

## *What you can do.*

1. You or your legal representative can contact your local municipality or the local Ministry of Natural Resources office to learn of any alteration restrictions (especially shorelines) and how these may affect any future property projects.
2. Talk with long-time residents to learn more about how the property may be affected by natural processes and potential hazards.
3. Consider making a map of your property. Identify physical and environmental characteristics such as soil type and depth, vegetation communities, ponding areas and learn how these can affect the vulnerability of your property to natural hazards and contribute to a healthy ecosystem on and off your property. Accept these natural conditions and modify your activities accordingly to protect yourself, your property and your shoreline. Sound difficult? We’ll help you do it.
4. Determine if current services (e.g. water and sewage) are adequate for your planned/intended use of the property.
5. Look beyond your property boundaries with a view to identifying the potential for erosion and the contamination of surface water and groundwater.

# Making a Map of Your Property

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## ***Why make a map?***

A map will help you understand the natural characteristics of your property and how your development and use of your property may affect them. Sometimes a small change in your actions is all that is needed to avoid problems. A map may help you identify any potential risks to water quality and ensure property use is compatible with legal restrictions. It is an important tool for the future management of your property.

You could draw your map on standard graph paper or better still, enlarge a copy of the survey of your property or download an image from an on-line map provider such as Google Earth or Microsoft Live Earth.

## ***What should you include on your map?***

### **1. Natural Features**

- Wetlands, streams and ponding areas
- naturally vegetated areas including type of plants (trees, shrubs, etc.)
- rock outcrops
- aquatic areas with boulders or aquatic plants.

### **2. Proposed or Existing Structures**

- cottage, home and other buildings
- orientation of all living spaces (sunlight/shadows)
- docks and boathouse
- roads, driveways, parking and/or other impervious surfaces
- sewage system leaching bed, outhouses

- foundation drains and outlets, all drinking wells (including dry or abandoned wells) or location of surface water intake
- eaves trough drains and direction of drainage from them
- sump pump drains/swimming pool backwash drain/area used for swimming pool or hot tub drainage water
- dog house/dog run
- hazardous materials storage (paints, solvents, etc.) and any underground or aboveground storage tanks of fuel oil, gasoline, or other petroleum product
- any buried cables or underground infrastructure including fuel tanks. .

### **3. Landscaped Features**

- trees, flower beds, vegetable garden(s) or any cultivated area(s)
- area for snow piles and snowmelt.

### **4. Legal Considerations**

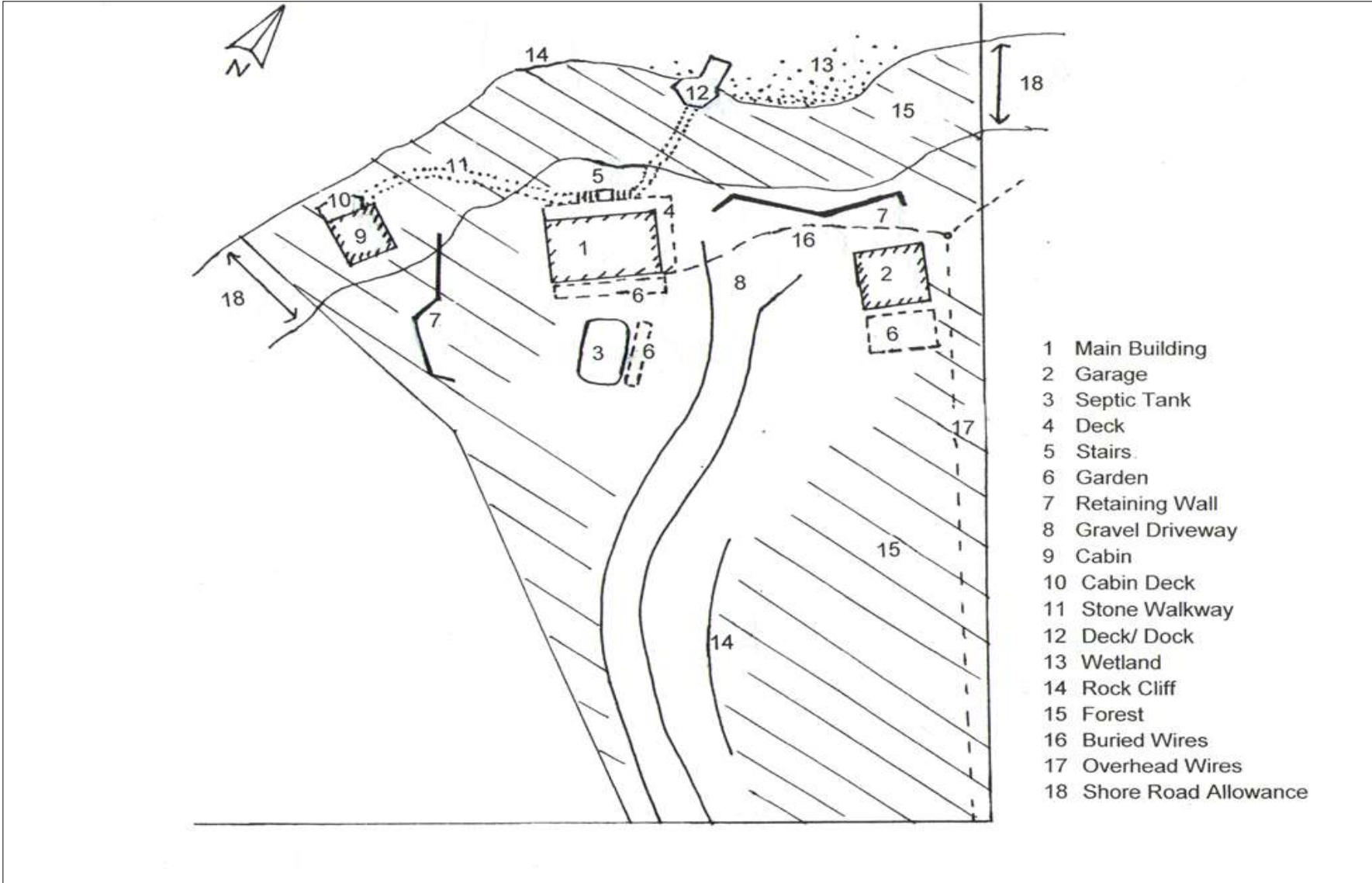
- Municipal zoning
- Property setbacks, conservation easements, environmentally sensitive areas, floodplain restrictions, shoreline road allowances and right-of-ways. Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESA) are designated zones of valuable ecological features or habitat that need special protection due to its surrounding landscape, wildlife or historical value.



#### **Tip**

Be careful about where you think your property ends. Government retains ownership of land to the high water mark. Erection of fences or other obstructions below this point is illegal.

# Making a Map of Your Property (example)



# Resource List

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## Getting to Know Your Property

*For more information....*

### **Environment Canada**

Edgett, R. 1995. Buyers Guide to Shoreline Property: Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River. Conservation Association of Ontario/Environment Canada: Burlington, ON.

### **Fisheries and Oceans Canada**

The Shore Primer- Ontario Edition  
[www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca](http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca)

### **Ontario Ministry of Environment**

Public Information Centre  
135 St. Clair Ave. West, Toronto, ON M4V 1P5  
1-800-565-4923 [www.ene.gov.on.ca](http://www.ene.gov.on.ca)

### **Muskoka Watershed Council**

9 Taylor Road,  
Box 482,  
Bracebridge ON P1L 1T8  
(705) 645-7393 **Fax** (705) 645-7888  
[www.muskokaheritage.org](http://www.muskokaheritage.org)

### **West Parry Sound Geography Network**

Maps available of West Parry Sound District  
[www.wpsgn.ca](http://www.wpsgn.ca)

### **Local Municipal Office**

*See Telephone Blue Pages.*



