

## Cottage Country at Night

Imagine you are sitting on a dock on a crystal clear summer night, the water as flat as glass, the dark surface mirroring the sky, the stars shining brightly above, a falling star tracing a path across the heavens. Unfortunately, this precious part of our heritage in cottage country is often obscured by the glare from a distant source of light across the water or by light trespass from a nearby property.

But it doesn't have to be this way. In most cases, making a few simple adjustments to existing lights will make them more dark sky-friendly and can easily solve the problem of light trespass that blinds us from our view of the night sky.

## Waterfront Lighting: A Special Concern

Artificial lighting allows us to engage in nighttime activities along the waterfront that would be impossible or unsafe under normal nighttime conditions. Whether it's for allowing us to get from one point to another, security, or simply making a property more attractive at night, our enjoyment of the night is enhanced by the use of artificial lighting. At the same time, our lakes at night provide a quiet open dark space that gives us privacy and the opportunity to enjoy the heavens.

The goal of sensitive waterfront lighting is to balance the ability to see at night with the desire to preserve the beauty of the night.

## Friendlier Fixtures



1. Barrel style directs narrow beam downward. 2. Mushroom head is effective on a flat elevation, not higher approaches.



3. Low-watt flood is acceptable if pointed down, but scalloped-shroud design reveals lamp. 4. Pinholed mushroom head leaks a little upward decorative light.

**Note:** Finding fixtures properly designed to prevent light trespass can be a bit of a challenge. Most lighting is designed to shed as much light as possible over a wide projection area. Search for full cut-off fixtures at your local hardware store or at a specialty lighting store. If they don't have full cut-off fixtures in stock, ask if they can be ordered. Don't be deterred if you only turn up partial solutions. A low-wattage lamp or bulb with a part cut-off fixture is a big improvement over the high wattage norm.

### Credits

Township of the Archipelago  
Township of Georgian Bay  
Township of Muskoka Lakes  
Town of Gravenhurst  
District of Muskoka  
Muskoka Lakes Association

Township of Carling  
Township of Lake of Bays  
Township of Seguin  
Town of Huntsville  
Georgian Bay Association  
Muskoka Heritage Foundation

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# Help Preserve Our Night Sky

A Sensible Waterfront  
Lighting Guide

## What's the Problem?

The most common shoreland lights are attached to cottages, garages, docks, boathouses and other structures on waterfront residential properties. While we may notice the glare from an unshielded boathouse light across the lake, it's likely that we've never ventured across the lake at night to see how **our own** property lights the night. Sensible lighting can minimize the two most serious lighting problems along the waterfront:

**Glare:** When we see a distant point of light across the water or when we are seeing light from the fixture itself rather than what the fixture is meant to illuminate, we are observing glare. Poorly designed or poorly installed lighting causes glare that can severely hamper vision and create a hazard rather than increasing safety.

**Light Trespass:** Light trespass describes the nuisance effect of improperly aimed lights on someone else's property. Poorly designed outdoor lighting can shine onto neighbourhood properties and into bedroom windows, invading privacy and creating an unattractive look to an area. Because the waterfront is unobstructed, water reflects glare from waterfront lights over the water to trespass on neighbouring and distant properties.

## Sensible Waterfront Lighting Tips

Sensible waterfront lighting does its intended job well, when there is minimum adverse impact on neighbours and the environment. Consider the following tips:

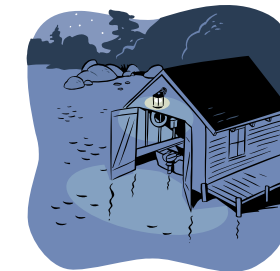
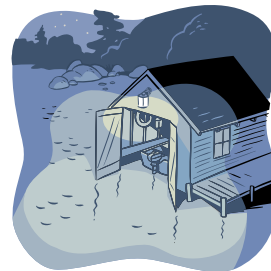
- Replace those 60-, 100- and 150-watt bulbs with 25- or 40-watt bulbs. Replacing high-wattage bulbs with lower-wattage bulbs is the first step to reducing light emissions across the lake or up into the night sky.
- Reduce light intensity with the installation of a dimmer switch on your outdoor lighting. Using a higher-wattage lamp or bulb in combination with a dimmer can be very effective.
- If you use flood lighting, don't use the most powerful lamp available. Just because the sticker on the fixture says "150-watt maximum" doesn't mean you have to start there. Ask about 35- to 45- watt incandescent exterior flood or spot lamps at your local hardware store or specialty lighting store.
- Use full cut-off or partial cut-off lighting fixtures to minimize glare. Full cut-off means that no light is emitted above the horizontal. Full cut-off fixtures are more effective and actually increase safety since they produce very little of the glare that can dazzle the eye and reduce our ability to see into shadow.
- Carriage or coach lamps have undirected 360-degree beams which are offensive to the night sky. If you don't want to remove these offending fixtures, you can just replace the standard 60-watt bulbs with 25-watt chandelier bulbs. Better yet, install low wattage PAR20 lamps that focus all of their light output in one direction.
- Retrofit existing fixtures with shields to reduce glare. As a precaution, any "do it yourself" electrical work should be followed by a safety inspection.
- Avoid dusk-to-dawn security lights. A more effective approach to security is a motion detector with a delayed reset.
- Aim lighting fixtures away from the water and neighbouring properties. Choose fixtures that aim or reflect light only onto the intended target area. Illuminate residential lanes or walkways from above, not below.

- Consider eliminating or reducing the duration that lighting is applied, especially if you choose to illuminate landscaping, shrubs and trees.
- Provide adequate light for the intended task, but don't over-light. Choose lights that meet your needs without lighting the entire waterfront. Look around for good examples of sensible lighting, or consult a local lighting designer.
- Glare from shore or dock lighting can interfere with boat navigation at night. Consider using non-intrusive alternatives to boat dock lighting such as solar reflectors or reflector tape. There are new technologies for solar lighting which are also suitable for boat docks.

## Light Switches



*Kill those double headed mega watt floods. You can still see where you are going with less-intrusive low-watt halogen spots that direct the beam.*



*Got a carriage light that's blinding approaching boaters? Simply relamp exchanging the standard 60 watt for a 25 watt chandelier bulb.*