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Muscle cars strengthen fundraising for a Lake George church. **BACK PAGE**

Stream report card is out

Three-year study evaluated 67 sites, near Lake George

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LAKE GEORGE ♦ Lake George Waterkeeper Chris Navitsky said he's got proof that development affects streams.

A three-year study of 40 streams that empty into Lake George recently completed by the Waterkeeper shows that streams change physically, chemically and biologically when development happens around them, he said.

The study looked at 67 sites on 40 streams and tested them for pH levels, the cloudiness of the water and the amount of bugs living in the stream, among other factors. "There's never been as comprehensive a study on the watershed," Navitsky said. "We wanted as wide a study as we could."

Among the findings, a report card on stream conditions was released, showing how each of the 67 sites compare to each other on each condition tested. West Brook, Stewart Brook and Smith Brook were among the streams with poorest results, scoring low on criteria such as the condition of the streambeds and habitat in and by the streams.

The study also found that most of the streams studied have smaller numbers of in-stream and streamside habitats and can support a decreasing amount of life.

In a press release from the Waterkeeper, Navitsky states that a number of streams studied are incorrectly classified as intermittent and not protected by state or local agencies when they really contain water year-round.

"There's always been the assumption that we've made false accusations that water quality is impacted by development," Navitsky said, adding that the study shows that upstream water quality, where little development has taken place, is better. "We are showing that our activities are impacting water quality."

Navitsky said the study is another tool in his arsenal for advocating for responsible development, as he often shows up before Planning Boards throughout the area to speak against development.

"We're not against development," he said. "We want to do development better."

Practices such as keeping vegetative buffers along streams and cutting less vegetation helps streams stay healthy, he said, and since much of the water in streams flows directly into Lake George, the water quality in streams has an effect on the water quality in the lake.

According to the press release, the study also serves as a baseline of stream conditions before new stream corridor regulations are adopted by the Lake George Park Commission and will help assess the effectiveness of the rules after they are put in place. The full report is available on the Waterkeeper's website, www.lakegeorgewaterkeeper.org.