

Winter SaltWatch

Salting of roads in winter keeps us safe on roads and sidewalks, but it can also pose a threat to fish and wildlife as well as human health. Road salt eventually runs off into the soil near the road. When winter is over, spring rains flush this salt into our streams, rivers, and lakes. This is a slow process. Even if we quit using road salt today, the salt already in the ground can persist for decades, and the salt content in our streams will rise as salt continues to percolate through the soil.

Fish and bugs that live in freshwater streams can't survive in extra salty water. And many of us depend on local streams for drinking water. Water treatment plants are not equipped to filter out the extra salt, so it can end up in your tap water and even corrode your pipes.

Road salt was first used in New Hampshire in 1941 – and its use quickly snowballed. Today, we use 10 to 20 million tons of road salt every year, depending on the length and severity of winter weather. Did you know that we use more than 10 times the amount of salt on our roads than is used in *all* American food processing each year? Doctors have become increasingly concerned that as road salt infiltrates our drinking water supplies, it can cause problems for people with high blood pressure because water treatment plants cannot remove all the extra sodium.

Traveling safely is important to us all. However, we need to ensure efforts to keep our roads safe do not destroy water quality in the process. Saltwatch is a citizen science project run by the Izaak Walton League of America.

--above excerpt is from the full blog at [Road Salt and Stream Health](https://www.iwla.org/blog/clean-water-corner/2017/11/01/road-salt-and-stream-health) at <https://www.iwla.org/blog/clean-water-corner/2017/11/01/road-salt-and-stream-health>