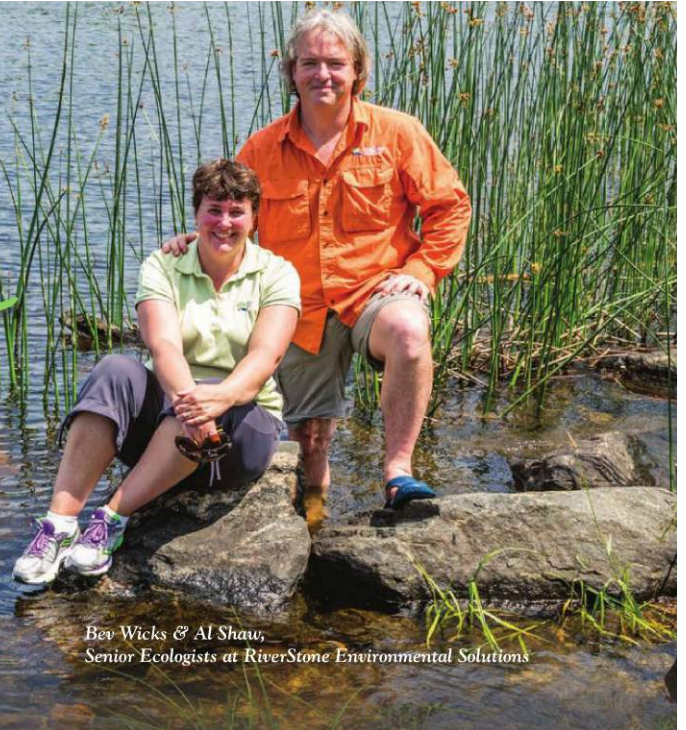


LIFE *on the edge*

PHOTOGRAPHY BY PAUL BENNETT

Finding balance where development meets nature



Bev Wicks & Al Shaw,
Senior Ecologists at RiverStone Environmental Solutions

Interesting things happen at the edges in nature. Where water meets land, where forest meets field, where mountains rise to meet the sky, an intricate balance is forged between the species that call these in-between areas home.

That balance is more difficult to create, but not impossible, where nature meets the developments of humans. Those man-made edges can be less than ideal for the flora and fauna disrupted or displaced by

buildings and roads, decks and lawns.

You want to do the right thing, but what happens when what you want to develop is at odds with the needs of the natural world?

Finding solutions
“There are innovative solutions that will reduce the impact of human developments on nature,” says Al Shaw, senior ecologist at RiverStone Environmental Solutions.

For large scale developments, like roads, solutions like wildlife overpasses, beneath-the-road animal highways, and cleverly constructed fence funnels ensure that vehicle-animal collisions are minimized. While you might not need an overpass above your driveway, equally innovative solutions go a long way toward getting you what you want while satisfying the requirements of regulatory agencies.

“Navigating the policies and legislation can be difficult for both property owners and developers,” adds Bev Wicks, also a senior ecologist at RiverStone Environmental Solutions which provides environmental impact studies, lake studies, research, education, expert witness and opinion and restoration services for large-scale developers, private land owners, government agencies and non-profit organizations. “When an assessment or study is needed to satisfy regulations, make sure you have someone who will give you an honest and timely solution and who

has a good track record of having proposals accepted at all approval levels.”

Turtle tales

Turtles like to live on the edge, and that doesn't mean their penchant for slow, life-threatening road crossings. Their habitat spans both water and land and that makes them poster animals for what can go awry when development meets nature.

RiverStone staff once rescued turtle eggs from a parking lot where a misguided mama turtle had made her nest.

“We also use turtles as part of an inquiry-based educational

outreach for kids,” says Bev. “But the concepts we teach them are the same ones underlying all of the work that we do.” The primary message is that a balance can be found that allows humans and nature to live in harmony.

“Human developments shouldn't be seen as ruining the natural environment,” says Al. “It's not one or the other. With careful thought and smart solutions, natural spaces and human development can blend together so that it's hard to tell where one ends and the other begins.” **DS**

BY DAWN HUDDLESTONE



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