



## Top 10 Ways to Keep Lakes Healthy!



New Hampshire is home to approximately 1,000 lakes and ponds. Not only are these irreplaceable natural resources important to the ecological health of the state, they contribute to our quality of life and to the state's economy. Here's how you can help keep them clean and healthy!

10. **Keep shorelines vegetated with native plants.** Plants along the shoreline help keep lakes healthy by absorbing polluted runoff water from roadways and lawns.
9. **Reduce your use of fertilizer.** Not only does fertilizer make your lawn green, when applied in excess or too close to the water, it makes your lake green with algae. You can check to see if your soil even needs fertilizer by conducting a simple test (contact your local University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension for more information.) You can save money by using lake water to fertilize your lawn or garden since it naturally contains nitrogen and phosphorus, the main components of conventional fertilizers. If you must use fertilizer, use phosphorus-free fertilizer (the middle number in the N-P-K listing on the bag should be '0'). And, remember, state regulations prohibit the use of all fertilizers, except limestone, within 25 feet of the high water mark of waterbodies. Twenty-five feet beyond the high water line, low phosphate, slow-release nitrogen fertilizer can be used.
8. **Dispose of yard waste away from water bodies.** Grass clippings and leaves contain nutrients such as phosphorus that aquatic plants and algae use to grow. In addition, this organic matter smothers the habitat of fish and other aquatic organisms and causes the lake bottom to become mucky. No one likes to wade and swim in muck!

7. **Wash boats, cars, and pets away from waterbodies.** Soaps and shampoos will add nutrients and other pollutants to the lake. Even camping soaps or biodegradable soaps may contain undesirable pollutants.
6. **Prevent erosion by stabilizing paths to the water.** Limit foot traffic to the shoreline by providing only one meandering pathway surrounded by vegetation. This will prevent polluted runoff water from being funneled directly into the lake. State regulations limit the widths of new paths to the water.
5. **Have your septic system inspected once a year.** Have your tank pumped every two to three years—organize a neighborhood pump-out to get a lower price. And, upgrade or replace your septic system if it is outdated or undersized. The typical life expectancy of a conventional septic system leach field is approximately 20 years. If your system is approaching this age, or if you have added bedrooms and/or bathrooms to your house since your septic system was built, you probably need a new one.
4. **Keep shorelines clean by not feeding waterfowl.** While it might be fun to feed the waterfowl, there is more than enough natural food available for the ducks and geese. Waterfowl waste contains phosphorus and nitrogen which contributes to undesirable algal blooms, and also lots of bacteria and possibly parasites, which can make swimmers sick.
3. **Remove hitchhiking plants and animals from boats and trailers—clean, drain, and dry!** Aquatic invasive plants, like milfoil, and animals like the Asian clam, spread from lake to lake by little fragments or larvae being transported from infested lakes to non-infested lakes on or in boats and trailers. Aquatic invasive species infestations make recreation in and on the water dangerous and unpleasant, disrupt the ecological balance of lakes, reduce shoreline property values, and are difficult and expensive to control, and almost impossible to get rid of!
2. **Join your local lake or watershed protection group.** If your favorite lake does not have a local group protecting it, contact NH LAKES and we can help you form one!
1. **Become a member of NH LAKES.** NH LAKES is the only statewide, member-supported nonprofit organization working to keep New Hampshire's lakes clean and healthy, now and in the future. The organization works with partners, promotes clean water policies and responsible use, and inspires the public to care for our lakes. For information, visit [www.nhlakes.org](http://www.nhlakes.org), email [info@nhlakes.org](mailto:info@nhlakes.org), or call 603.226.0299.

*We hope that you will share this article with others—we just ask that you include the following: This article was originally published by NH LAKES. Thank you!*