



Enjoy mud season and protect our lakes!

by Andrea LaMoreaux, NH LAKES

In New Hampshire, we take mud season and winter storm damage clean-up in stride. Despite the complaints, I think most of us actually enjoy mud season—often referred to the ‘fifth season’ in New England. Mud season typically starts in March and extends through April, and is advertised by the gaudy orange load limit signs that are posted on many town roads. After a long winter, mud season brings a welcomed opportunity to go outside and get some fresh air, sunshine, and exercise—just what the doctor ordered for a bad case of cabin fever. It is a time to clean up the yard, plan home improvement and landscaping projects, and guess when ice-out will occur on the lake.



If you are looking for an excuse to get outside this spring and enjoy what mud season has to offer, here are a few things you can do to clean up your property and protect the health of local lakes, ponds, rivers, and streams...

Sweep your driveway, walkways, and steps to remove leftover sand. Sand used to help keep roadways, driveways, and walkways passable during the icy and snowy winter months can cause serious problems when washed into waterbodies by spring rains. Sand deposited in aquatic environments can destroy fish spawning or nesting sites and sand particles suspended in the water can clog fish gills. Deposited sand also causes waterbodies to become shallower, often facilitating plant and algal growth—while having some plants and algae in a lake is a good thing, too much of either is not good for the health of the lake, or our enjoyment of the lake.

Survey your property for areas where runoff water has caused erosion. Take a walk around your property to see if recent rains have created any gullies or other eroded areas. If possible, fix eroded areas before the next rainstorm occurs. If you aren’t sure how to fix an erosion problem, contact a local landscaper or NH LAKES to get pointed in the right direction.

Remove storm debris in accordance with the Shoreland Water Quality Protection Act. If your property is located within 250 feet of a lake or river, downed and damaged trees and trees posing an imminent hazard or threat may be felled and removed. But, be sure to leave the stumps in the ground since stumps do a very good job preventing soil from being eroded off of the landscape and polluting the water (and, it is also illegal to remove the stumps). Trees and storm debris from severe weather events can be removed from waterbodies. If

equipment is necessary for the removal of debris from a waterbody, be sure to monitor the equipment for fluid leakage and use temporary work pads to lessen the impacts to the shoreline. The New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services recommends that property owners take photographs of damaged trees and structures for documentation.

For the sake of our lakes—and for my mental health!—I’m looking forward to the next warm day to get outside and clean up my driveway and yard. Are you?

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 more lake-friendly tips, visit www.nhlakes.org, email info@nhlakes.org, or call 603.226.0299.

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