



How to Become a LakeSmart Community and Achieve the LakeSmart Community Award

What is a LakeSmart Community?

A LakeSmart Community is a group of neighbors, property owners, and lake enthusiasts committed to working together to restore and preserve the health of their lake by living in a lake-friendly way. A LakeSmart Community can be located anywhere in the drainage area—or watershed—of a lake or pond.

A LakeSmart Community is built around a group with a shared mission and a defined geographic area of properties. Ideally, the group is an established organization in “Good Standing” with the New Hampshire Secretary of State. Examples of organizations are:

- Road associations
- Lake, watershed, and beach associations
- Homeowners associations
- Water quality groups or coalitions

How does a community participate?

Step One: Apply to be a LakeSmart Community

To participate as a LakeSmart Community, an eligible group must submit an application to NH LAKES and designate a volunteer coordinator to serve as the LakeSmart Ambassador. This individual serves as the local point of contact and is a liaison between NH LAKES and their community. The LakeSmart Ambassador coordinates with their organization’s leadership, encourages community members to participate, and schedules LakeSmart visits for interested property owners in the community. This position is described in detail later in this handbook.

As part of the application process, the group will also confirm or establish the geographic boundary of its LakeSmart Community. This boundary helps identify which properties are included in the community. An organization may already have defined boundaries, often outlined in founding documents or bylaws. If not, NH LAKES will provide recommendations and assist, using tools like [New Hampshire Parcel Data](#) and [StreamStats](#).

Step Two: Get your Community Involved

With an approved application, the LakeSmart Ambassador will promote the LakeSmart Program to property owners within the geographic boundary of their LakeSmart Community. Individual property owners participate by creating an online LakeSmart profile—a free, personalized, and confidential platform hosted by NH LAKES where they answer questions about their property, home, and lifestyle. Through their profile, they learn about lake-friendly living practices, and using the information provided, they have the opportunity to achieve the individual LakeSmart Award for lake-friendly living.



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Step Three: Plan a Community Site-Visit Day

The LakeSmart Ambassador works with NH LAKES to establish a day for in-person property tours. Property owners must connect with their LakeSmart Community to receive an in-person property tour. Once the property owner has submitted their answers, a NH LAKES-trained LakeSmart Guide tours all properties participating in the LakeSmart Program.

NH LAKES recognizes that all properties and property owners are at different stages of lake-friendly living. A property is not expected to achieve the LakeSmart Award immediately after the property tour—many properties will have opportunities to become more lake-friendly before the owner achieves the LakeSmart Award. All participants receive feedback tailored to their lake-friendly living opportunities.

Earn the LakeSmart Community Award

To receive the LakeSmart Community Award, a community should collectively show exemplary effort to live in a lake-friendly way, including the wide achievement of individual property owner LakeSmart Awards in the community. To achieve the LakeSmart Community Award, no less than 15% of individuals in the community must have received their individual LakeSmart Award.

NH LAKES recognizes that each community is different and may have additional goals it sets to achieve beyond the minimum participation. Individual communities can work with NH LAKES to establish additional levels of LakeSmart by accomplishing goals such as:

- Higher community participation than the initial requirement, such as 50%, 75%, or 100%.
- Organizing community-oriented improvement events like group septic pump-outs or plant nursery bulk orders.
- Implementing lake-friendly practices in communal areas, such as a vegetated swale, a rain garden, or stream bank restoration at an association beach.
- Helping develop and promote a community of LakeSmart businesses (such as landscaping and wastewater treatment system professionals) to help community members become LakeSmart.

Benefits of Becoming a LakeSmart Community:

By becoming a LakeSmart Community, you:

- Protect property values with a clean and healthy lake.
- Preserve the enjoyment of the lake for future generations.
- Keep water clean and safe for recreation and wildlife.
- Unite neighbors around shared responsibility for your lake.
- Prevent erosion, septic failures, and shoreline erosion.
- Reduce harmful algae blooms, such as potentially toxic cyanobacteria blooms.
- Support local businesses that provide lake-friendly living services and rely on lake tourism.