
ENVIRONMENTAL Fact Sheet



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Lake Protection Tips Some Do's and Don'ts for Maintaining Healthy Lakes

Watershed runoff is one of the greatest water quality concerns to our lakes and ponds. Runoff research shows that any activity that increases runoff into lakes produces negative impacts to water quality. Lakes and ponds naturally exist at lower elevations in the landscape. Rain or snowmelt “runs” downhill, transporting contaminants on the land to our lakes and ponds. Reducing the flow of the runoff will lessen pollutants to our lakes. Listed below are activities that lake residents and others can do to help slow the flow and reduce pollutants from the watershed.

All lake residents should employ low impact development (LID) techniques. LID can be employed by everyone, everywhere. They work by slowing runoff flow, spreading it out, and allowing it to soak into the ground. LID techniques include rain gardens, rain barrels, vegetated rooftops, and the use of permeable pavement.



Homeowners need to control runoff on their property with the use of best management practices, such as maintaining a buffer zone of natural vegetation along the shore. Use native plantings to re-vegetate bare areas. All roads and paths leading to the lake should be curved to reduce erosion.

Septic systems should be maintained properly. A system should be designed to handle the load it receives. The size of a system should be increased as the size of a family grows. Septic tanks should be pumped every three to five years. Check leach field for soft wet areas or septic smells and replace faulty systems.

Do not bathe, shampoo, or wash boats, pets, or other objects in the lake.

Check all home cleansing products to make sure they say “phosphate free.” Home cleansing products containing phosphorus have been banned in New Hampshire through RSA 485-A:55.

Do not use fertilizer within 30 feet of a lake. From 30 feet to 250 feet, use low phosphate, slow release nitrogen fertilizer on vegetated areas only.

Do not burn brush or leaves on the ice or near the shore; the nutrients remain behind to runoff into the lake. Do not dump leaves or grass clippings in or near the lake. They also add nutrients to the water.

Do not urinate or defecate in the lake, and don't allow pets to do the same. Cows, horses, or other groups of animals should not be housed near the lake where phosphorus from waste products runoff to the lake.

Do not feed ducks or other aquatic organisms; there is plenty of natural food available. Nutrients produced from unnatural food outside the lake's watershed, will be added to the lake through the organism's feces. Discouraging waterfowl populations can also reduce the risk of swimmers' itch in specific lake areas.

Do not use powerful outboard motors in shallow areas. The nutrient-laden bottom sediments can be churned into the overlying water to support increased algae and cyanobacteria growth (shown here), increased turbidity and decreased transparency.



For More Information

For information about lake protection and native plantings, contact the DES Limnology Center at (603) 271-4793 or visit www.des.nh.gov . Information on maintaining septic systems is available from the DES Subsurface Bureau at (603) 271-3501 or visit www.des.nh.gov . For more on low impact development and best management practices for runoff control, visit www.des.nh.gov or www.epa.gov .