

# Conservation Matters

Title: Help Keep Our Lakes Clean and Healthy

Submitted by: Rumney Conservation Commission

We are fortunate that we live here in the Lakes Region. Lakes, rivers and ponds are only minutes away. We can enjoy much of what the area has to offer and still maintain a comfortable social distance with our friends and family. This return to a more local recreational activity has also reminded us that we have a responsibility to keep our waterways clean and healthy. After all, we all live “upstream” from some water body.

Whether you are a recreationist or homeowner, what you do can affect our lakes and rivers. Fortunately, we have lots of easily accessible information to help us be good stewards. The New Hampshire Lakes Association ([nhlakes.org](http://nhlakes.org)) is a great place to start.

For those of you with boats, you may have met a Lake Host. These folks greet boaters at many launches and conduct courtesy boat inspections. They check boats, trailers, and gear for hitchhiking plants and animals. The Lake Hosts teach thousands of boaters each year methods for aquatic invasive species prevention. Boaters, remember, **before leaving the launch area:**

**CLEAN** off any mud, plants, animals and debris from your boat, trailer, and gear. Dispose of all material away from the waterbody where it won't flow back into the water. ***Cleaning is the law in New Hampshire!***

**DRAIN** water from the boat motor, bilge, live wells, ballast bags and tanks, storage compartments, and gear. Blow out all water in jet-powered craft and tip motors and paddle crafts to let out water.

**OPEN / REMOVE** all drain plugs and drain all compartments and gear away from the water where runoff won't flow back into the lake. Draining and keeping all drain plugs out/open while trailering is the law in New Hampshire!

**DRY** off anything that came in contact with the water to remove invasive species not easily seen. To use your boat again within five days, thoroughly rinse with clean water away from waterbodies and towel dry. Rinsing with high pressure, high temperature water is best.

For homeowners, you should be aware of The New Hampshire Shoreland Water Quality Protection Act. It was enacted to protect lake health by controlling soil erosion and reducing polluted runoff water within 250 feet of lakes, pond, rivers, and major streams. Setbacks from the water are established for structures and activities. If you plan to clear any land or build any structure near the shoreline, consult the Shoreland Water Quality Protection Act well-before starting your project.

**The New Hampshire Wetlands Program** protects and preserves lands under lakes and ponds and wetlands from activities that would negatively affect wetlands. Wetlands help keep lakes healthy by reducing flooding, filtering polluted runoff water, recharging groundwater, and supporting fish and other wildlife. If you plan to conduct work in a lake or pond, or in the bank of a lake or pond, you will need a state wetlands permit. Typical activities that require permits include: building, expanding, or repairing a dock; constructing or repairing a retaining wall; and, adding sand to a beach or creating a new beach.

A great resource is the LakeSmart Lake-Friendly Living Program. This education, evaluation, and recognition program is free, voluntary, and non-regulatory. It includes an evaluation process to determine how lake-friendly your property and activities are. The evaluation covers driveway and parking areas, structures and wastewater treatment systems, and yard and play areas. For properties along the water, the shoreline and shallow water areas of the lake are included. It will help answer the question – Do I need a permit? There is an online self-assessment survey you can take from the comfort of your home computer. This will take about 30 minutes to complete and mostly asks ‘true’ and ‘false’ questions. If your property doesn’t initially score high enough to achieve LakeSmart status in all areas, you will be provided with recommendations. Once you have made upgrades, you can take the self-assessment again and request an optional follow-up site visit.

When you achieve LakeSmart status in all areas, you will be awarded the coveted LakeSmart Award. You can help make lake-friendly living the cultural norm in your community by proudly displaying your LakeSmart Award and leading through example and encouraging your neighbors to do the same! Visit the NH Lakes website at <https://nhlakes.org> for tons of great information on how to live and enjoy our lakes and rivers more responsibly, and to download a free copy of LakeSmart





Stinson Lake



Lake Host conducting boat inspection.