

# Visiting the Water's Edge: A Guide for Lakeshore Property Renters

**Welcome to Lake Fairlee!** Below are some ways to enjoy the lake while also being a thoughtful visitor. Most of these suggestions are simply common courtesy. A few are also the law. Some of these issues may be new to you. By following these suggestions, you can help us all live on the shore with minimal impact on the water quality, aquatic habitat, and wildlife with whom we share Lake Fairlee.

## Water Quality and Lake Health

A lake is a delicately balanced ecosystem. Its health is reflected in the clarity of the water, the abundance of fish and other wildlife, and the absence of toxic algae "blooms." The lake can be damaged by what people do on the land and in the water, often unknowingly.

## Who Owns the Lake?

The public lakes and ponds of Vermont are owned by the people of Vermont. All of the waters of Vermont are managed to preserve and protect a healthy ecosystem as well as to guarantee the right for all to swim, boat, fish, and otherwise enjoy. Vermont's lakes and ponds are part of what is known as the Public Trust Doctrine. This concept means it is the responsibility of all who use the lake to "do no harm" to this public resource. Please take care to follow these lake-friendly guidelines.

## HOW TO LIGHTEN YOUR IMPACT:

### OUTSIDE:

#### 1. Shoreland Plants ~ let them grow and thrive!

Lakeshore trees, shrubs, and plants protect against erosion, filter overland pollutants, and provide necessary habitat for wildlife. Do not cut trees or shrubs.

#### 2. Aquatic Plants ~ keep them rooted.

All aquatic plants grow to provide habitat for wildlife, provide oxygen in the water, maintain sediments, and keep waters clean. Do not pull any plants.

#### 3. Protect Native Species and Water Quality from Invaders

Non-native invasive plants and microscopic animals can create infestations that threaten native species' diversity and survival, interfere with the lake's recreational uses, and cause financial challenges.

Follow these Vermont fishing and boating practices to protect against invasive species:

- **Have your boat inspected by a Greeter at the boat launch on Rte. 244.** Boats entering or leaving Lake Fairlee must be inspected at the state boat launch to make sure aquatic invasive plants or animals are not "hitchhiking" on your trailer, boat, or equipment.
- **When you take your boat to another body of water**, be sure to follow the "clean, drain, and dry" protocol before relaunching your boat on Lake Fairlee. Don't forget to drain and clean bilges, wells, coolers, snorkels, fishing equipment, etc.
- **Dispose** of unused baitfish on land in a trash can.
- **Never** release plants, fish, animals, or aquarium materials into a body of water, unless they came from that body of water.

#### 4. Boating, Fishing, and Wildlife Regulations

- **200 Foot Rule: speed must be less than 5 miles per hour and must not create a wake** within 200 feet of shore, dock, swim area, a person in the water, other boats, or anchorage.
- **Personal Watercraft:** The use of personal watercraft (jet skis) is prohibited on Lake Fairlee.
- **For all types of wildlife interactions**, maintain a respectful distance and never chase wildlife, which is against the law.
- **Protection of Loon Nesting Sites:** Between May 1 and July 31 all persons and boats are prohibited within 300 feet of any loon nesting site that is identified by signs and buoys.
- **Report loon or any wildlife harassment** to the game warden or state police. (*see contact information below*).

- **Do not feed ducks or geese.** Encouraging waterfowl runs the risk of increasing disease-causing bacteria in the water as well as the incidence of swimmers' itch.
- **Use only non-lead sinkers** to stop lead poisoning. Most lead sinkers are banned in Vermont.
- **Reel in fishing lines** to avoid entanglement or the potential for loons to ingest lures or bait.

## 5. Pet Care

- Scoop the poop! Do not allow human or animal defecation or urination in or within 150 feet of the lake (including an outhouse). Pet waste can be a health risk to humans and other pets.
- Humans, dogs, cars, or boats should not be washed in or near the lake.
- Cover or store garbage and trash in an enclosed area to avoid attracting raccoons and other scavengers that pose a threat to loons.

## INSIDE:

**1. Use eco-friendly cleansers and laundry/dishwasher detergents.** Everything that goes down the drain affects the groundwater and may ultimately end up in the lake and/or your well.

- Use phosphate-free soaps and detergents that do not contain dyes, water softeners, or synthetic perfumes. Try products from Meyers, Simple Green, or Seventh Generation.
- Use "green" bathroom cleaning products such as baking soda, borax, or vinegar, not chlorine bleach scouring powders. Chlorine bleach prevents a septic system from functioning correctly and can create hazardous chemical compounds in the lake.

**2. Think at the Sink: these should never go down the drain.**

- Do not dispose of toxic materials down the drain (oil-based paints, solvents, drain openers, polishes, used oil, paint thinner, chlorine bleach, etc.) These compounds impact ground and surface water and kill the naturally occurring bacteria that make septic systems function properly.
- Avoid the use of a garbage disposal.
- Dispose of cooking grease and oils in your trash, not down the drain.
- Do not flush expired or unwanted prescription and over-the-counter drugs down the toilet or drain. Ask your local pharmacy or police department about a "take-back" program or be aware of community collection events.

**3. Be Water Wise:** The more water that flows through your system, the greater the possibility of nutrients leaching out unfiltered by the septic system.

- Avoid running water when not needed.
- Run dishwashers and clothes washers only when full; stagger loads over several days.

**4. Tips to help the septic system operate properly:**

**Don't Overload the Commode:** this could clog and damage septic system components.

- Do not flush materials other than toilet paper.
- **Number of Occupants:** The number of occupants during the rental period should not exceed the capacity of the home and, in particular, its septic system.  
**Note:** *Vermont standards set septic system capacity at two people/bedroom for the first three bedrooms and one person/bedroom beyond that.*
- Renters should notify owners in advance regarding extra persons who may be visiting for short periods of time, including those camping out in tents.

## VERMONT LAKE RESOURCES:

### Vermont Fish and Game

General Information: 802-828-1000  
Law Enforcement: 802-828-1529  
Licensing: 802-828-1190  
[www.vtfishandwildlife.com](http://www.vtfishandwildlife.com)

### VT State Police - Marine Division

Boating Law Information:  
802-24-8727  
[www.vsp.vermont.gov](http://www.vsp.vermont.gov)

### VT Dept. of Environmental Conservation

General Information: 802-828-1556  
Aquatic Invasive Species: 802-828-1535  
[www.dec.vermont.gov](http://www.dec.vermont.gov)