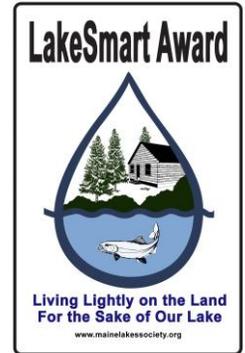


LD 959: An Act To Increase Funding for the Maine Lakes Society's "LakeSmart" Program and the Lake Stewards of Maine Volunteer Lake Monitoring Program

LakeSmart is a person-to-person education program for lakefront homeowners that benefits communities, towns and all lake users; and helps Maine meet its Clean Water Act obligations. LakeSmart's trained volunteers provide homeowners with site-specific recommendations to protect water quality, improve wildlife habitat, and preserve the market value of shoreland properties. It's free, voluntary and non-regulatory.



HOW LAKESMART WORKS



- When homeowners express interest in LakeSmart, a lake association volunteer trained by the Maine Lakes Society visits them to assess their property and make recommendations as needed.
- Assessments cover Nonpoint Source Pollution (NPS): erosion and its potential for stormwater runoff into the lake, the use of herbicides and pesticides, septic system maintenance, the extent and quality of protective vegetation, and the effectiveness of the lakeside buffer to capture and filter stormwater before it can load the lake with pollutants.
- The volunteer reviews survey results with the homeowner and provides written, illustrated [recommendations for improvement](#) as needed.
- Properties that meet LakeSmart standards receive two distinctive Award signs for posting at the shore and driveway head. The signs reward good stewardship, point out lake-friendly living practices, and help spread LakeSmart participation throughout the community.

- LakeSmart is run on each lake by local lake associations. The Maine Lakes Society provides its partner associations with training, all materials and technical support without cost.
- The 10-hour training takes place in class, in the field and with quality assurance sessions on volunteers' home lakes. The [training is also available 24/7 via video](#) on the Society's website.
- The Society funds a network of geographically distributed support HUBs which provide technical and other needed assistance to volunteers in the field. With six HUBs now, the Society will expand the strategic HUB support system to 10 centers, which will entail \$25,000 a year in costs.



WHY LAKESMART IS COST-EFFECTIVE, AND WHY IT WORKS

- In the five years since the Maine Lakes Society took over LakeSmart from the state, our trained volunteers have visited 822 shoreland homeowners on 68 lakes (click [here](#) for a state map), presented 476 Awards and caused the installation of hundreds of Best Management Practices.
- The average LakeSmart visit takes 3.5 hours, making a total volunteer investment of 2,877 hours – a value of \$71,000.
- LakeSmart is a tool that enables lake associations to cause real-world activity to fight pollution and create a community norm of individual accountability for lake health. It's cost effective because it leverages the love these communities have for their lakes to cut expenses and speed diffusion.

THE GREAT PONDS BELONG TO THE PEOPLE OF MAINE. EVERYONE –NOT JUST LAKE RESIDENTS- BENEFITS FROM LAKE PROTECTION

- 650,000 Mainers, fully 50% of us, recreate on lakes every year.
- Lakes contribute significantly to tourism, Maine's #1 industry.
- Healthy lakes drive the economy of regions lucky enough to have them. Hundreds of Maine towns rely on shorefront tax revenues to provide vital services, sometimes more than 80 percent of town income, or more. *Have you ever wondered how many lakes it takes to float a school?*
- **Lakes drain to rivers that drain to the Gulf of Maine. Surface waters and their burdens ultimately become coastal and affect the fishing industry, recreation, and coastal land values and economy.**



EXPANDING NPS POLLUTION REPAIR AND PREVENTION IS URGENT

The Maine Department of Environmental Protection (MEDEP) bears the state's responsibility to protect public waters. In support of this mandate, the department maintains the [Nonpoint Source Priority Watersheds](#) list which currently shows 21 lakes to be impaired (these lakes no longer meet Clean Water Act requirements), and 162 others that are directly and immediately threatened by NPS.

- Maine has always reaped the benefits of healthy lakes in relatively undisturbed lake watersheds. In 2005, our 2,313 great ponds were shown to generate \$3.8B in spending, more than 52,000 jobs and drinking water for one-third of our population each year. (2005 financial values are worth approximately two percent more today according to increases in Cost of Living Allowances.)
- The hard truth is lakes can fail, and when they do the cost of repair is staggering. East Pond in Smithfield has bloomed for decades. In 2018, it received an in-lake alum treatment which restored its former benefits and beauty. The project required four years of focused preparation and research. It cost \$1,074,000. These efforts purchased approximately 20 years of clear water.

Absent strenuous NPS repair activity in its watershed, East Pond will need another treatment sometime around 2038.

- As East Pond, and MEDEP's NPS Priority Watersheds list show, Maine is not holding its ground against the advance of NPS Pollution, even though our state – thanks to the wisdom of previous legislators – has the strongest statutory protections in the nation. More needs to be done.
- LakeSmart and Maine's Shoreland Zone Regulations target that narrow slice of land around a lake which is its last best chance for protection from overland and groundwater pollution.
- Among public waters, lakes are particularly vulnerable to NPS degradation because they are still waters. Unlike running rivers and streams, lakes keep most of the pollutants that enter them, thus allowing the slow but certain accumulation of harm.
- Our window of opportunity for successful lake protection is closing. The greater number of intense rain events (a 71 percent jump across in New England since 1968); droughts causing drier, more easily eroded soils; warmer summer water temperatures that foster algal growth; and shorter winter ice cover are combining to accelerate lake declines by heightening the impact of NPS Pollution today.

STOPPING NPS POLLUTION IS A FEDERAL MANDATE

The anti-degradation clause of the Clean Water Act requires all states to stabilize or improve the quality of their public waters. The Society's LakeSmart program directly supports this obligation by delivering NPS Pollution control practices to lake shorelands.

WHY LD 959 DESERVES SUPPORT

- Maine has 2,313 great ponds. All are susceptible to severe damage from NPS pollution.
- No state could possibly fund enough personnel to find and plug the myriad and often minute causes of NPS pollution. Only community-based, volunteer-driven programs have the manpower and influence to establish lake-saving norms of behavior. LakeSmart has proven it can create this lake-saving commitment across communities.
- LakeSmart will cost the Society \$105,000 this year. Since adopting it, we have expanded the program by 600 percent, changed it into a robustly supported teaching instrument that can save Maine lakes, and we run it at half what it cost as a public program. Nevertheless, the number of yet unprotected lakes in developing watersheds calls for rapid LakeSmart expansion.
- The increasing encroachment of NPS Pollution means every lake in a developing watershed needs this program. We urgently need more resources to publicize LakeSmart's effectiveness and expand its reach. Supporting 10 HUBs will cost \$25,000 a year; aside from the expenses of administration, training, providing materials and advertising. The \$100,000 appropriation recommended in LD 959 for LakeSmart will provide a sustainable foundation on which the Society can expand the program.
- **Because this efficient, privately-run program directly supports Maine's federal Clean Water Act obligations, it is appropriate and fair that LakeSmart receive strong public support.**