

# GREENWorks

## Ideas for a Cleaner Environment

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### **Leave No Trace On Our Lakes:** ***Protect Lakes - Even When They Are Hidden Beneath the Ice*** By NHDES and NH Fish and Game

Although they may be shrouded in several inches to several feet of ice in the winter, lakes are still susceptible to many sources of pollution, from natural sources but also from a variety of winter activities that take place on them. One of the most common activities involving lakes in winter is ice fishing.

In New Hampshire, ice fishing is a very popular pastime to wile away the winter days. Some hardy souls trek out to face the elements with little shelter other than a thick pair of overalls and a jacket, others set up camp on the lake and use it like a second home. Whether you call them bobhouses, shanties, or ice houses, these structures allow ice anglers refuge from the elements while participating in an exciting winter time activity. Some bobhouses are staked out in one particular location all season, while others are designed for mobility, allowing anglers the ability to move from location to location. On some of the larger lakes in New Hampshire, clusters of bobhouses are erected, forming their own type of seasonal communities.

Whether you pack light or bring a lot of creature comforts with you, it's important to take care with your ice-fishing gear – so that you don't inadvertently harm the lakes you rely on for the big lunker fish. Here are some of the common items used during a day of fishing on the ice, or generated while spending a day on the ice, and the problems they can pose for water quality and aquatic life:

Item	Problems & Solutions/ Leave No Trace Approach
Lead-based tackle	State law prohibits the sale and use of lead sinkers weighing 1 ounce or less and lead jigs less than 1 inch long along their longest axis. Small lead tackle such as sinkers, sounders or jigs can be lost through the hole and sink to the lake bottom. During the open water season loons and other waterbirds can pick these up when they swallow small pebbles from the bottom, causing lead toxicity and death. Please only use non-lead based tackle.
Plastic jigs and tube baits	These can float around the lake and wash up on beaches, causing hazards to barefoot shoreline visitors or wildlife. They can also be swallowed by a variety of birds and other wildlife. Please remove these items wherever they are found.
Petroleum Products	Petroleum products are used for a variety of things during a day of ice fishing, including fuel for heating,

	power augers, all-terrain vehicles, snowmobiles and more. Petroleum, if spilled in the lake, can be toxic to aquatic life. Petroleum can also trigger algal blooms that harm water quality. Please take the utmost care in using and storing petroleum products when you are on the ice and remember to never leave gas cans behind in your bob house.
Live Bait	Live bait, though regulated, can occasionally contain non-native species or carry pathogens that are dangerous to aquatic life. Never dump bait on the ice or down a hole in the ice. Carry it off the lake and dispose of it in the trash.
Human Waste	If you've got to go...Please don't go on the ice or down a hole in the ice. Human waste contains pathogens and bacteria that are harmful to humans and animals alike, and nutrients that are harmful to lake health. The sensible thing to do would be to bring a portable, self containing toilet or to use a nearby bathroom to take care of personal needs.
General trash	All types of trash are generated during a day of ice fishing, including bait containers, food wrappers, beverage containers, spent fuel cans and more. Carry out what you carried on the ice, and dispose of it properly.

In addition to the more “disposable” items listed above, bobhouses themselves may be propped up on blocks or supports to prevent the structure from freezing into the ice. Rope or cable tie-downs are sometimes added to attach the bobhouse to the ice to prevent the structure from moving during heavy winds. These items must not be left behind when you remove a bobhouse from the ice. Wood blocks can float around the lake, causing navigation hazards to boaters during the open water season, and ropes and tie-downs can get wrapped around propellers or swimmers’ legs, causing equipment damage and harm to public safety.

Also, fires directly on the ice are discouraged. Wood ash left after a fire contains high levels of phosphorus and other nutrients and minerals that are harmful to lake health. Phosphorus, in particular, encourages the growth of unwanted aquatic plants and algae in New Hampshire’s waters. Even small amounts of this “nutrient” can cause large increases in growth of these organisms, resulting in reduced clarity and aesthetic values of lakes and ponds. Build fires in a fire-safe container that can be completely removed when the fire is out (including all ashes), or on approved shoreline areas where it is safe to do so, rather than on the ice.

State laws help to protect the quality of lakes by regulating pollutants that could pose problems to the overall health of a lake or pond. It is unlawful for any person to put or place, or cause to be put or placed into a surface water of the state or on the ice over such waters, or on the banks of such waters, any solid waste or hazardous waste, including but not limited to bottles, glass, crockery, cans, scrap metal, junk, paper, garbage, tires, old automobiles or parts thereof, trees or parts thereof, or similar litter.

Like hiking and camping, ice fishing should be a “leave no trace” activity. For the health of our lakes and ponds, when you pack up at the end of your winter adventure on the ice, please take a moment to look around and make sure the ice is as (or more) debris-free than when you claimed your spot for some fishing fun.

(revised April 2012)

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