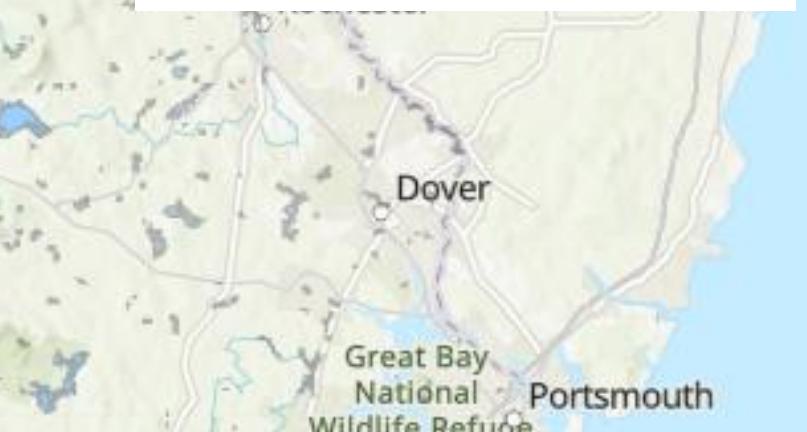
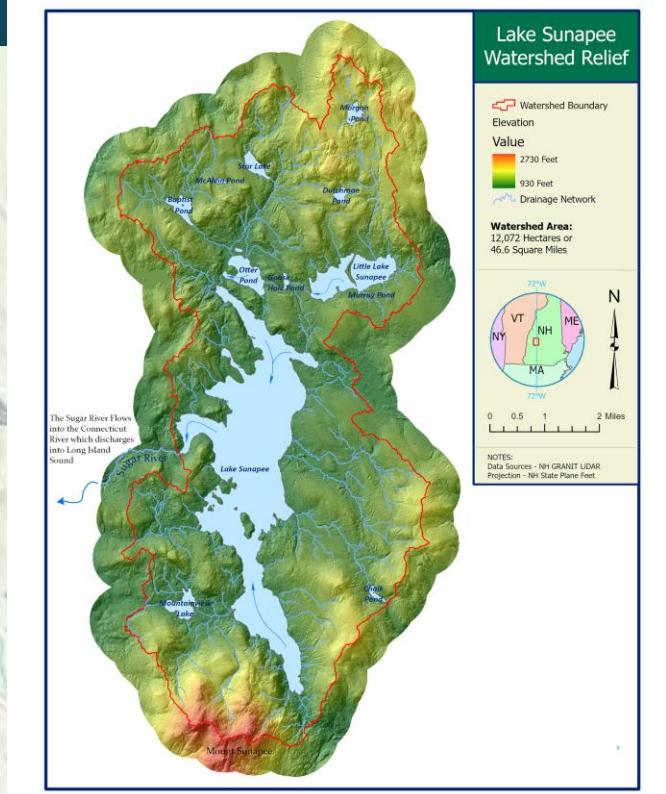
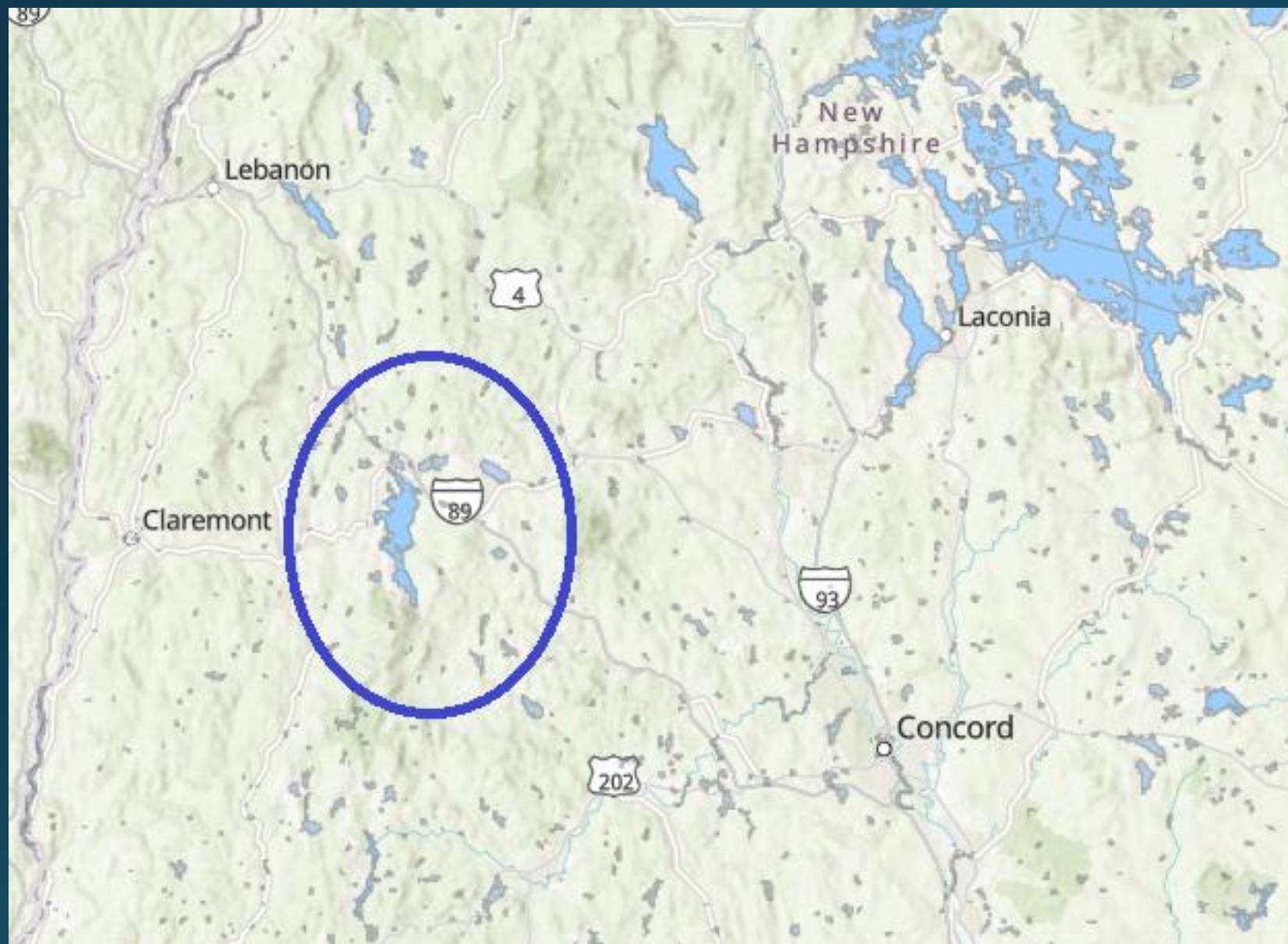


Septic Regulations in the Lake Sunapee Watershed

Elizabeth Harper,
Executive Director
Lake Sunapee Protective Association





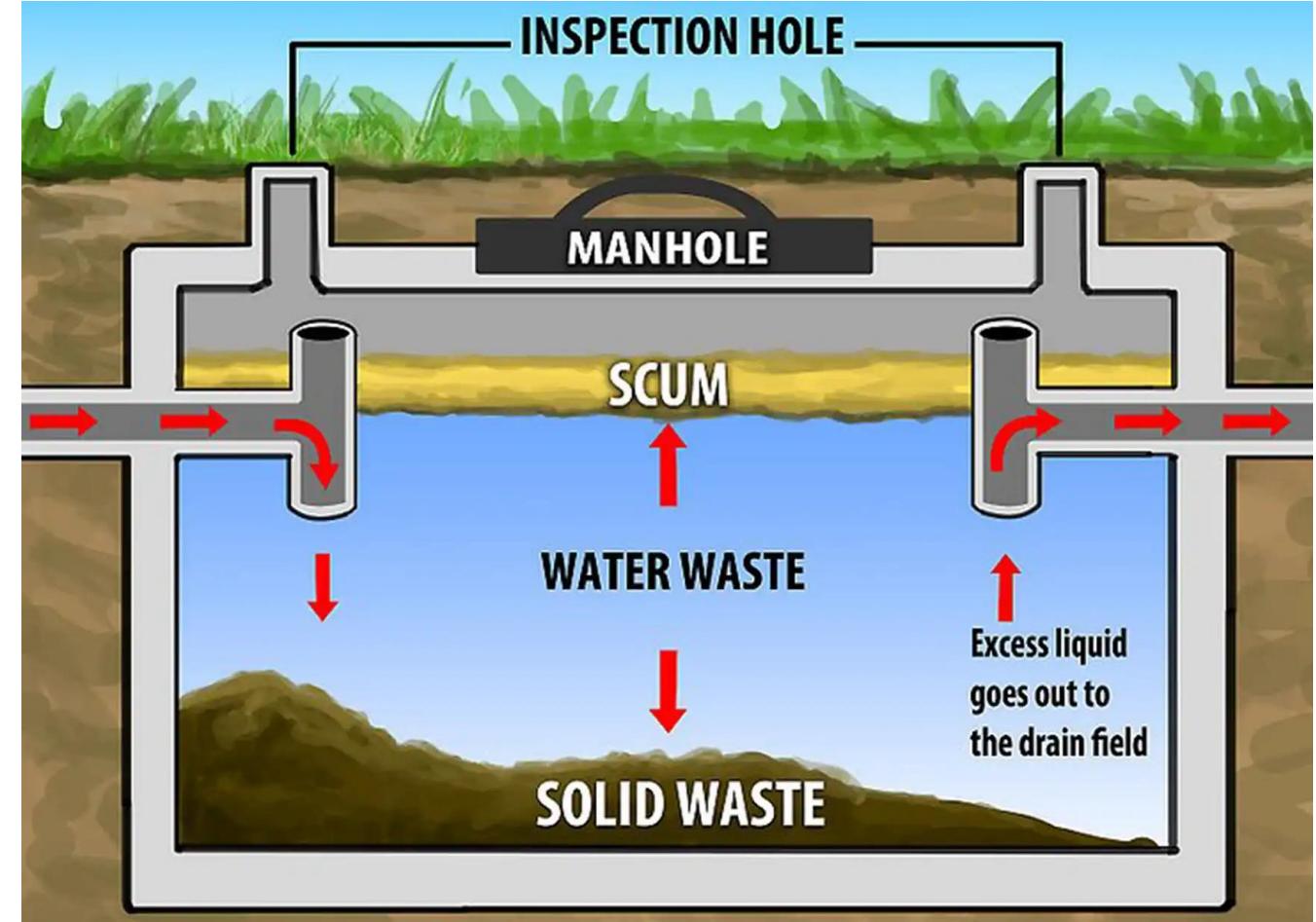
Our Mission

LSPA, founded in 1898, is dedicated to preserving and enhancing the environmental integrity of the Lake Sunapee region, especially its lakes and watersheds, through **education, research, and collaborative action.**



Septic Regulations

1. Why regulations are needed
2. How we got started
3. Who we engaged
4. The process we followed
5. Variations among towns
6. Lessons learned
7. Next steps
8. Questions



Watershed Management Plan



DK Water Resource Consulting LLC



STONE ENVIRONMENTAL
100% EMPLOYEE OWNED



Lake Sunapee Watershed Management Plan



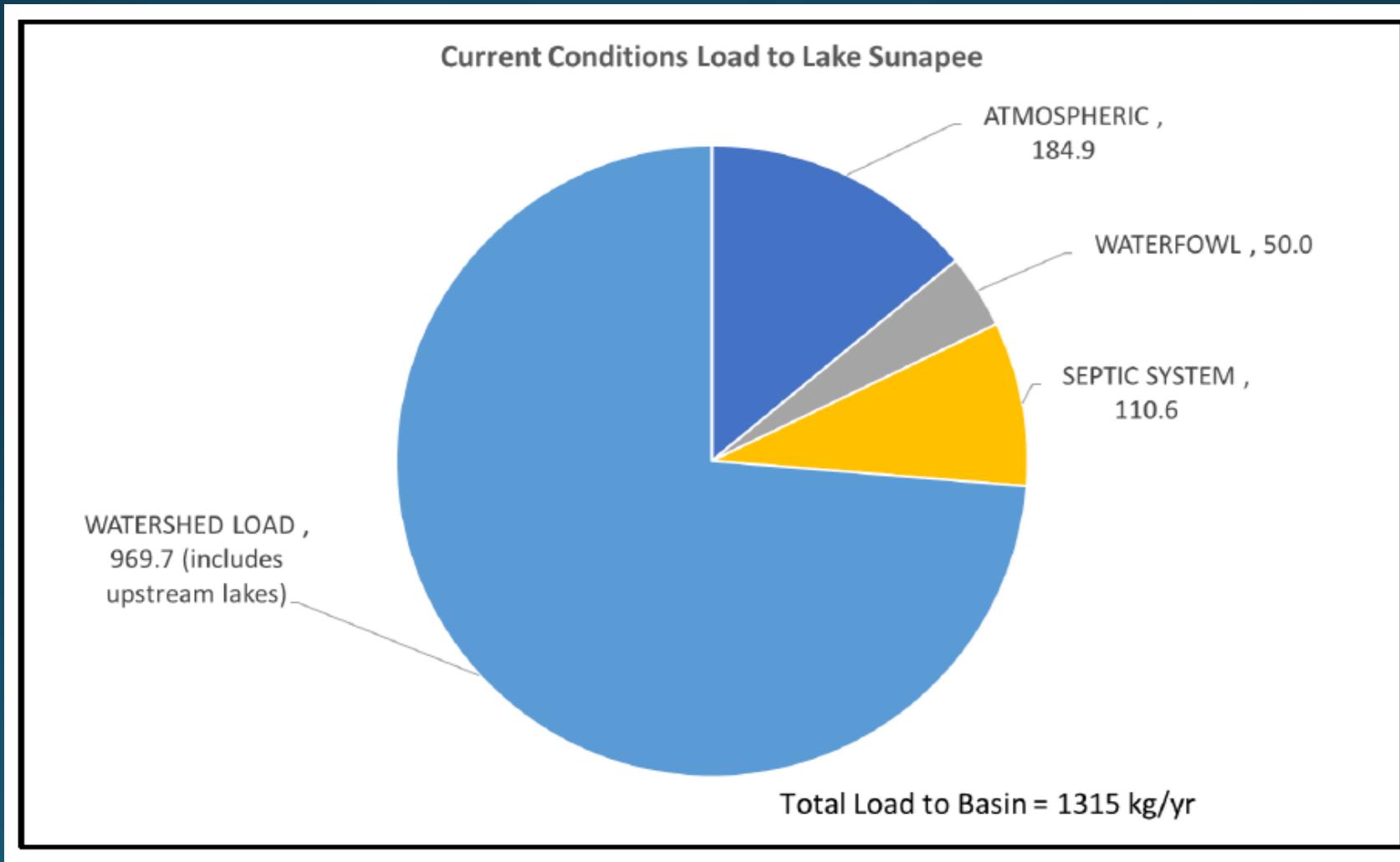
March 2020



LSPA

*Devoted to the Environmental Quality
of the Lake Sunapee Watershed*

Contribution of septic systems to estimated total phosphorous load is 8.5% per year



Threats posed by failing systems

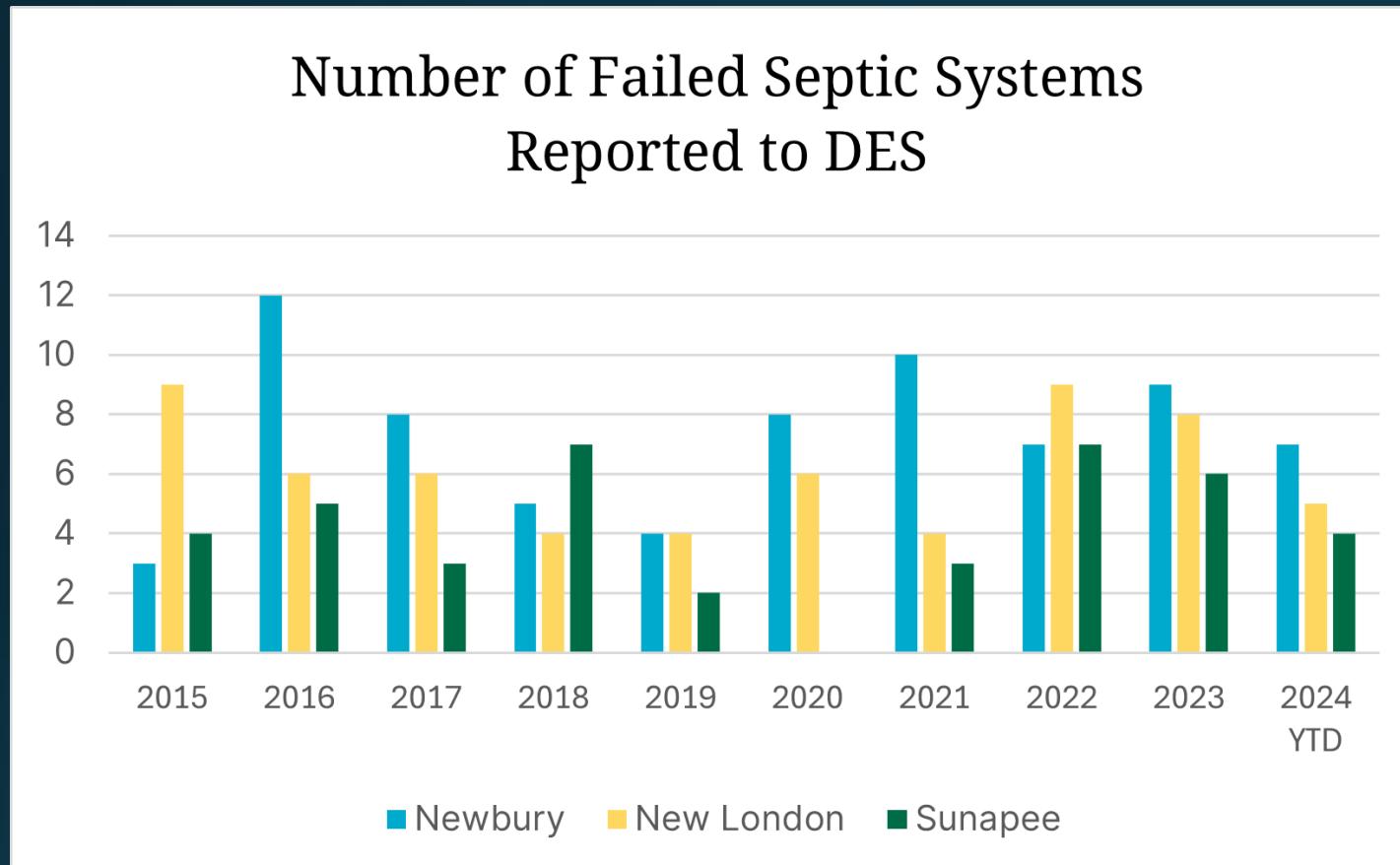
Failing systems leach nutrients like phosphorus and nitrogen into the water, which can result in toxic cyanobacteria blooms.

Contamination affects drinking water sources and recreation and poses health risks.



This is NOT Lake Sunapee!!!

Is there really a problem?



NHDES has documented septic system failures in every town with a shoreline on Lake Sunapee every year since at least 2015.

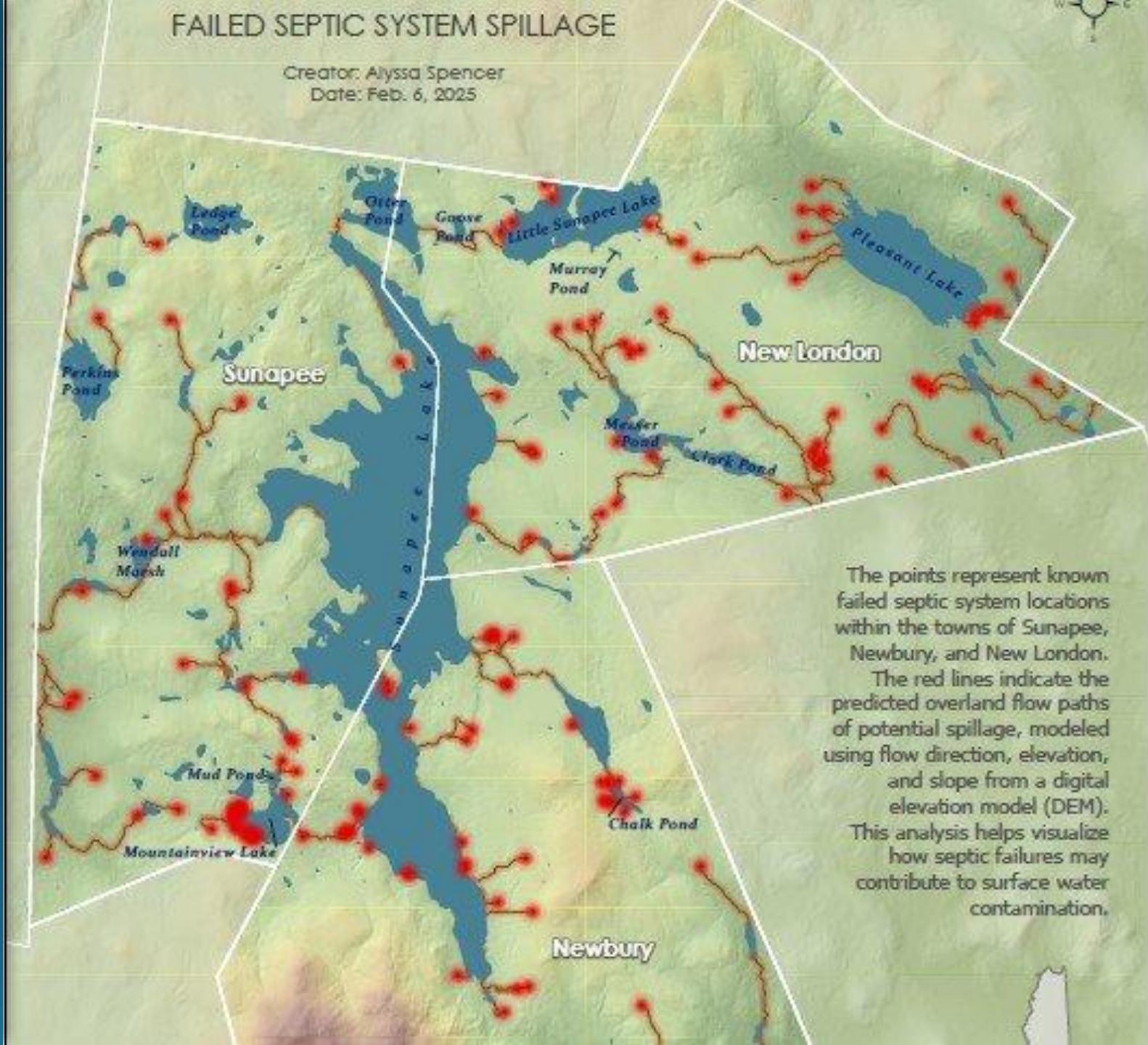
Actual failure rates are likely much higher than shown in the graph because not all failures are reported to NHDES.

Why regulations are needed

Failed systems affect not only individual home-owners and businesses but also:

- Neighboring properties
- Anyone downstream
- Everyone who depends on surface waters for drinking water and recreation

**Map created by Alyssa Spencer, a Unity College student pursuing a Master's Degree in Environmental GIS.*

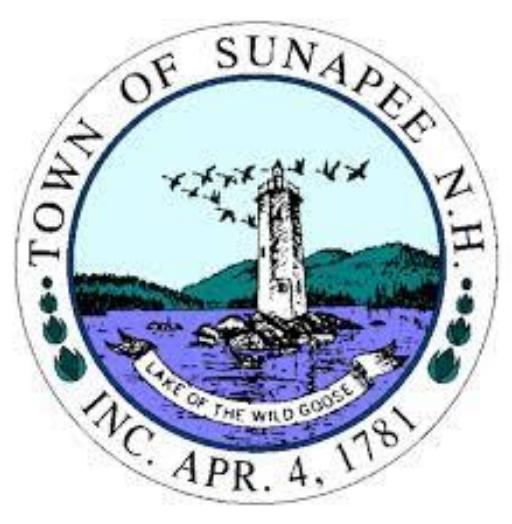


How we got started...

Collaboratively! Learning from others and building partnerships



Chesterfield, Deering, Meredith,
Rye, Windham



LSPA Watershed Committee



New Hampshire Association
of Conservation Commissions
SERVING NEW HAMPSHIRE'S COMMUNITIES SINCE 1970

Process – Rule or Ordinance?

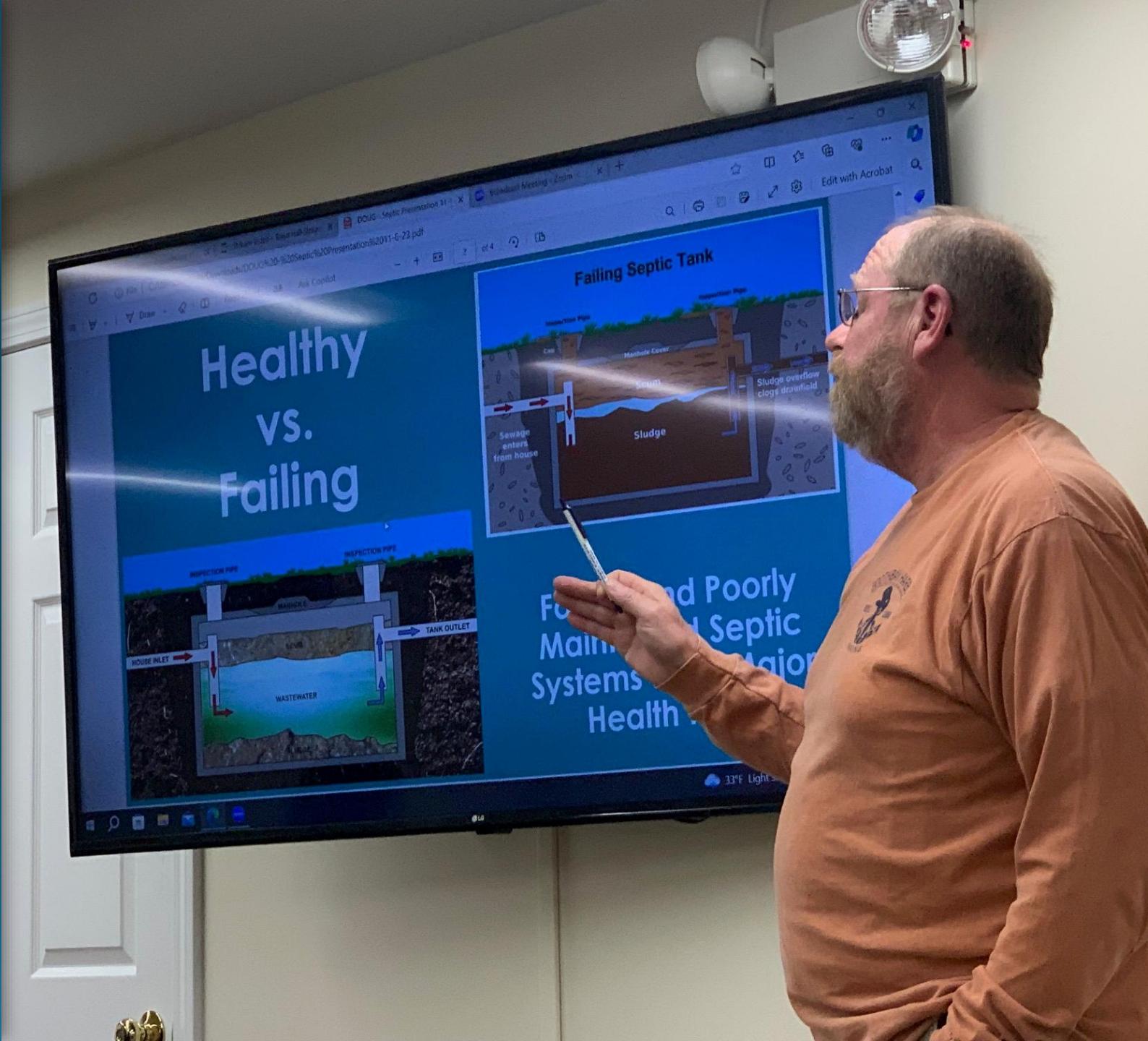


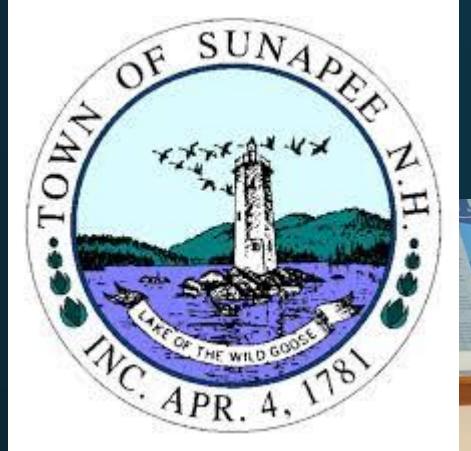
Health Officer authority

Because failing septic systems release bacteria and viral pathogens into waterbodies, RSA 147:1 gives town Health Officers the authority to adopt regulations ensuring that wastewater disposal systems shall not be a nuisance or injurious to public health.

Health Officer

Authority: Health Officers NH RSA 147:10 grants municipal health officers, with the approval of the Board of Selectmen (NH RSA 147:1), authority to adopt regulations that will ensure that wastewater disposal systems shall not be a nuisance or injurious to public health.





Points to consider early in the process

- Administrative burden
- Geographic extent
- Consequences for non-compliance?
- Exceptions?

Communicating the WHY



Pushback, challenges and concerns

Anti regulation

Expense for homeowners

Administrative burden

Compiling records of existing systems

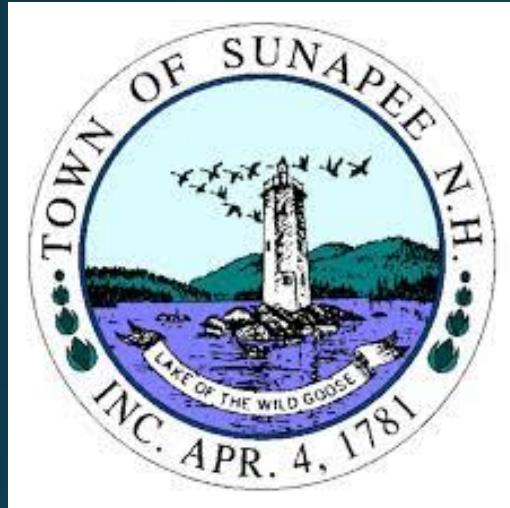
Penalties

Education is enough

Questions to ask as you get started:

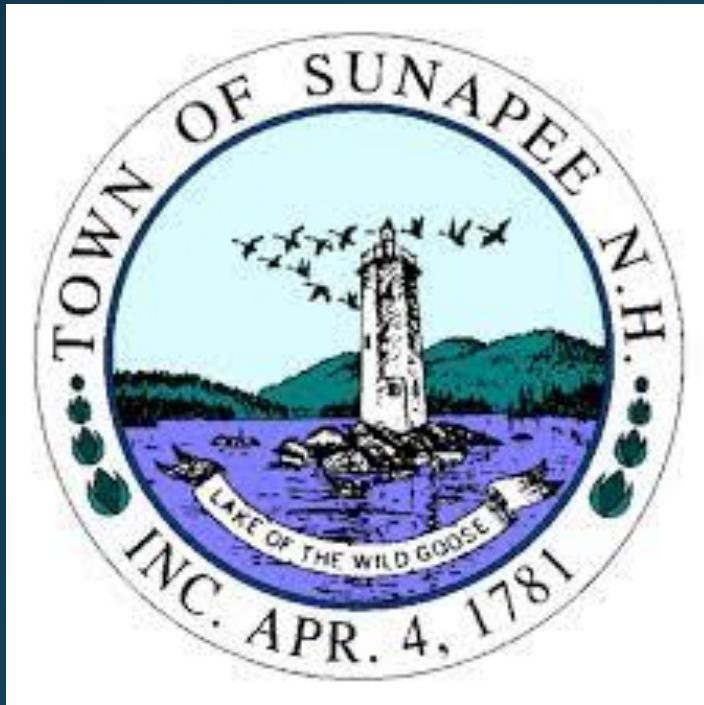
- What should the scope of the ordinance be: overlay districts, town-wide, other?
- How many homes and businesses are on septic in these areas?
- Who would oversee the administrative tasks? What records are currently available?
- Should there be penalties? What should they be? How will they be enforced?
- Should there be exemptions? What would the criteria be?

Sunapee's Regulations - March 2023



- All developed properties with septic systems in the Shoreline Overlay District in the Town of Sunapee shall be pumped a minimum of **once every three years.**
- In cases where a septic tank or pump chamber has not been pumped out in the three years prior to the adoption of this regulation, such systems shall be pumped out **within one year of the effective date of this regulation.**

Sunapee's Regulations



Applicability :

- Private septic systems located wholly, or part within the Shoreline Overlay District, (within 250 feet of lakes & ponds over 10 acres in size and fourth order streams)
- All commercial food preparation facilities within the Town of Sunapee on a septic system.

Springfield - October 2024



“Everything in the watershed ultimately drains into our groundwater, streams and lakes. Any leaking or failing septic system regardless of proximity to our lakes can have a negative impact on water quality. This is a community issue that requires all residences to participate. Every septic system should be pumped and inspected a minimum of every three years.”

Tim Bray – Health Officer

Springfield



“...apply to all individual sewage disposal systems located on a property lot, that is wholly, or in part, within the Shoreline Overlay District (250 feet from lakes and ponds >10 acres)”

In Springfield, these protected waterbodies include: Baptist Pond, Dutchman Pond, Kolelemook Lake, Star Lake, Little Lake Sunapee, Little Stocker Pond, Morgan Pond, and Palazzi Pond

Springfield



Exceptions:

- Holding Tank Exception (80% full)
- Grease trap Exception (twice a year)
- Seasonal properties (up to 6 years with waiver)
- NO waivers for commercial or short-term rental properties

New London – December 2024

All developed properties with Individual Sewage Disposal Systems in the Town of New London shall be pumped a minimum of once every three years. A copy of the receipt for pumping and the general inspection report shall be submitted to the Town of New London Health Officer or designee.”

Effective Date January 1, 2026



New London

Waivers:

- Owners of residential properties may apply for a waiver to the Board of Selectmen, or designee.
- Criteria for a waiver shall demonstrate usage of 50% or less of a septic system capacity on an annual basis.
- Waivers shall not be granted for commercial properties or residential rental properties



Newbury



- This Ordinance applies to all septic systems on land located wholly or partly within the Town of Newbury.
- All residential properties shall have the septic tank(s) pumped out a minimum of once every three years.
- All residential properties which have a short-term rental unit(s) shall have the septic tank(s) pumped a minimum of once a calendar year.
- All residential properties which have a long-term rental unit(s) shall have the septic tank(s) pumped a minimum of once every three years.
- All commercial properties licensed as a food service establishment under RSA 143-A:3, IV shall have the septic tank(s) pumped out a minimum of once a calendar year.

Newbury



Exceptions:

Low Use Exception: property owners may apply to the Newbury Health Officer or designee for a waiver of the once every three-year pumping requirement. In no case shall a septic tank(s) be pumped less than once every five years.

Waivers may be granted by the Newbury Health Officer where the owner shows that a waiver will not frustrate the purposes of this Ordinance.

Decisions by the Health Officer may be appealed to the Board of Health.

Waivers may be granted only to the current owner and will not carry-over to new property owners.



Compliance

Property owners that do not comply with this Ordinance shall be issued written notice to comply within thirty calendar days.

Property owners that do not comply to the first notice of thirty days will be sent a second notice granting fifteen days to comply.

Property owners not complying to the second notice may be found in violation of Town regulations and may be susceptible to fines in accordance with RSA 48-A:15 and RSA 485-A:42 for each day of neglect or refusal after notice is provided in RSA 485-A:37 and determined by the Selectboard.

Lessons learned

- Involve all stakeholders early and often – especially those who will be implementing the policy
- Learn from towns who have already enacted similar regulations – don't reinvent the wheel
- But also recognize that the culture of each town is unique
- Make sure the community has opportunity for input, discussion and education
- Provide support to town employees and boards
- Know the process and timeline

Next steps

Supporting towns across the watershed as septic regulations are implemented:

- Providing educational outreach materials
- Writing grants for septic inventories
- Hiring interns to help gather records and compile databases



Thank you!

Kirk Bishop, Stu Greer, Doug Gamsby, Shannon Martinez, Allyson Traeger, Carol Wallace, Barbara Richter, Andrea LaMoreaux, Charlie Marsden, Charlie Hirshberg, Tehya Kloster, Quinn Aldrich, Alyssa Spencer, Julia Danielsen, Nick Baer, Adam Ricker, Bebe Casey, Kim Hallquist, Mike Morgan, Kristen Schultz, Jack Kutner, Newbury Septic Committee led by Dave Rhodes, Wayne Whitford, Tim Bray, Jerry Cooper, Mike Thomas

Questions?



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Elizabeth Harper
Elizabeth@lakesunapee.org

Join us!

- Visit the Center for Lake Studies in Sunapee Harbor
- Check out our events page
- Attend our Regional Lakes Meetings
- Become a member (you don't have to live on Lake Sunapee!)

