

# Water sampling and testing (inland lakes)

How you can volunteer to track water quality through collecting samples from inland lakes.

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## About the program

The Lake Partner Program welcomes hundreds of volunteers every year to check the water quality of about 800 of Ontario's 250,000 inland lakes.

Your efforts will help scientists detect early changes in Ontario's water quality affected by:

- climate change
- sewage treatment plants
- septic tanks
- lawns
- agricultural fertilizer
- urban storm runoff
- construction sites
- etc.

The government coordinates the program through the Dorset Environmental Science Centre (<http://desc.ca/>).

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## Volunteer requirements

To participate, you need to:

- have **access to a boat** in order to take appropriate samples
  - bring some minor supplies, including:
    - 6–12 meters of clean rope — depending on the clarity of the lake
    - duct tape
    - something to serve as a weight (e.g., a metal pipe cap) — to help sink the sample bottle
    - something to serve as a weight (e.g., large washers) — to help sink the Secchi disk
    - an eyebolt — to attach the Secchi disk to the rope
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## How to collect samples

As a volunteer, you will:

- measure the clarity of the lake water
  - a total of 6–12 times: 1–2 times/month from May to October

- take water samples from a lake
  - a total of 6–12 times: 1–2 times/month from May to October — if samples are from a lake not on the Canadian Shield
  - 1 sample in May — if samples are from a lake on the Canadian Shield

Please write the date on your water samples.

### Tracking data collection

To keep track of the data you collect, you'll need to print and fill out:

- a spreadsheet ([https://files.ontario.ca/moecc\\_156\\_excel\\_data\\_sheet-en.xlsx](https://files.ontario.ca/moecc_156_excel_data_sheet-en.xlsx)) — for more detailed observations (Excel spreadsheet)

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### Choosing a lake

To choose a lake:

- contact a Lake Partner Program Coordinator:  
1-800-470-8322  
email (<mailto:lakepartner@ontario.ca>)
- inform the coordinator of the lake — and location on the lake — you're interested in sampling

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### Enroll in the program

To participate:

- complete registration request online (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/water-quality-local-lakes>) or
- email us (<mailto:lakepartner@ontario.ca>), fax or send a letter with the following information:
  - **lake information**
    - lake name
    - location on lake (e.g., name of bay, etc.)
    - township
    - GPS (latitude, longitude, if known)
  - **volunteer information**
    - name
    - address
    - email
    - phone number
    - name of association (if applicable)

### Mail:

Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks Lake Partner Program  
Dorset Environmental Science Centre  
PO Box 39  
Dorset ON P0A 1E0

## Sampling toolkit

Once you enroll in the program, you'll receive:

- a kit with detailed instructions on how to collect samples
    - waterproof sheets for data collection
  - tools to take water samples and measure water clarity
    - Secchi disk
    - sampling bottle
    - funnel with a filter
    - 2 labelled glass phosphorous tubes, marked with a fill line
    - labelled plastic jar
  - a return envelope with stamps — to submit your measurements (data sheet and spreadsheet)
  - pre-paid postage labels and a box — to submit your water samples
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## How to submit samples

Please mail water samples and measurements to:

The Dorset Environmental Science Centre  
PO Box 39  
Dorset ON P0A 1E0

The samples will be analyzed and information will be added to the database.

### Related

Lake Partner Program: 2012 sampling instructions (<https://www.ontario.ca/document/lake-partner-program-sampling-instructions>)

Check a lake's water quality (<https://www.ontario.ca/document/water-quality-ontario-report-2012>)

Check the quality of your drinking water (<https://www.ontario.ca/data/drinking-water-surveillance-program>)

Drinking Water interactive map (<https://www.ontario.ca/environment-and-energy/map-provincial-stream-water-quality-monitoring-network>)

Dorset Environmental Science Centre (<http://desc.ca/>)

Great Lakes Protection (<https://www.ontario.ca/document/ontarios-great-lakes-strategy>)

