

Other Ways To Help Protect Lake Keowee

Septic Field Inspections. Septic field failures are a major cause of pollution in lakes and streams. According to the EPA, the average household septic system should typically be inspected every three years and pumped every three to five years. Systems with electrical or mechanical components may need to be inspected more often.

Advocates for Quality Development (AQD) is a member of the Lake Keowee Source Water Protection Team, which manages a program that currently provides financial aid to help property owners repair or replace failing septic systems. For more information on this program and eligibility requirements, email lkswptoutreach@gmail.com.

Disposing of Rx Drugs. Many prescription medications used to treat people & animals now exist in measurable quantities in our lakes, rivers, streams, and groundwater. Even small amounts of these contaminants can impact the health of fish & aquatic life. Never flush unused pills down the toilet. Several area pharmacies offer responsible disposal options.

Biodegradable Boat/Dock Cleaners. Use non-toxic, phosphate-free, biodegradable cleaning agents with a neutral pH, Select the Marine/RV category on this site: <https://epa.gov/saferchoice/products>

Leaf Litter: Don't blow leaves into the lake. Decaying leaves increase phosphorus and nitrogen load and deplete oxygen in water.

Consider Native Plants. Native plants are ideally adapted to our soils and climate and, once established, can grow with little to no fertilizer and pesticides, and may require little to no irrigation. Native plant information is available at South Carolina Native Plants Society: <https://cnps.org> and Clemson University Extension Service's database of native plants: <https://clemson.edu/extension/carolinayards>.

Here are the common names of a few native plant options:

Ground Covers:

Green & Gold (shade)
Partridge Berry (shade)
Switchgrass (sun)
Upland Sea Oats (sun or shade)

Bushes: (All part shade to part sun)

Beautyberry
Oakleaf Hydrangea
Sweet Shrub
Virginia Sweetspire

Perennial Flowers: (Sun Preferred)

Pink Muhley Grass (*Muhlenbergia capillaris*)
Butterfly Weed & other milkweeds
False Indigo
Purple Coneflowers

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**Protecting
Lake Keowee
By Protecting
Our Shores**

Whether you own property in a lakefront community or simply enjoy swimming, fishing, boating, or drinking tap water, you have a vested interest in Lake Keowee's health. And what we all do on the LAND that surrounds the lake can have a major impact on water quality.

Shoreline regulations are designed to protect water quality, natural habitat, and beauty. Lake Keowee waterfront properties may be subject to rules set by both Duke Energy and Oconee County that determine what improvement, landscaping and maintenance activities are permitted. If the boundaries of land protected by Duke Energy overlap with Oconee County, the strictest regulation applies.

If you own lakefront property, this primer's high-level overview of shoreline protections can help you decide when to seek permission and who to contact. We simplified the language to make it easier to understand and compare regulations. For more detail or potential changes, use the links listed for official documents & check AQD blogs at <https://aqdupstate.com>.

The back page highlights helpful suggestions for maintaining septic systems, properly disposing of prescription drugs, using enviro-friendly boat and dock cleaners, managing leaf litter, and adding native plants.

Rewards & Risks

The Rewards: Natural shoreline buffers that feature trees and native, drought-tolerant plants check erosion and filter out harmful fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides before they reach the lake. They also provide important wildlife and song bird habitat.

The Risks: Disregard of shoreline regulations can risk penalties. Not only can Duke Energy Lake Services require replanting of trees and native plants, it can revoke dock permits. Silt-fence failures sometimes prompt government inspectors to halt construction.

What if you don't own waterfront property?

What you do on your land can still impact water quality. When it rains, harmful runoff from properties that are set back from the shore can still enter the lake. This makes proper erosion control, especially during construction, essential. What's more, improper disposal of unused pharmaceuticals can be harmful to fish and aquatic life.

Duke Energy Shoreline Regulations

What's The 804?

Duke Energy purchased the land it needed to create Lake Keowee. Later, when it sold lake-adjacent parcels, Duke tried to retain ownership of a ribbon of shoreline above the lake's 800-foot "full-pond" elevation.

In many subdivisions, Duke owns all shoreline below the 804-foot contour. On steep lots, this buffer is relatively narrow, while on flat lots the Duke-owned buffer can extend more than 50 feet. Both residential lots and waterfront lots owned in common by a community must comply with all Duke shoreline regulations.

**How can you find the 804-elevation on your land?
Just locate your lakefront property pins. They mark the 804.**

***Duke Energy's Shoreline Management Plan (SMP):
[www.duke-energy.com/community/lakes/services/
kt-shoreline-management-plan](http://www.duke-energy.com/community/lakes/services/kt-shoreline-management-plan)***

Email: LakeServices@duke-energy.com Phone 800.443.5193

Highlights of Key Regulations Below the 804

- **VIEWSHEDS:** Lake Services meets on-site with the owner to map a lake view corridor & detail permitted activities such as the number & type of trees removed for view or access paths & tree replacement requirements.
- **NO VIEWSHEDS ON COMMON LOTS:** If community-owned lots aren't permitted for structures, they are not eligible for viewsheds. Trees below the 804 on such lots cannot be cut or pruned to improve views.
- **PATHS:** Footpaths (max. 4-feet wide) should wind to avoid 3-inch+ diameter trees and be stepped to minimize runoff. Since concrete and other impervious surfaces are prohibited, walkways must have natural ground cover or be made of natural materials and follow land contours.
- **NO LAWNS:** Turf grasses like fescue and zoysia are prohibited.
- **NATIVE GROUND COVER:** Native ground covers, especially ones beneficial to wildlife, may be planted to supplement existing native vegetation or as part of approved shoreline stabilization projects.
- **METHODS:** Approved herbicides can only be used to kill non-native invasive vegetation & poison ivy, sumac and oak. Mechanical clearing is only allowed for approved shoreline stabilization or remediation.
- **STORM DAMAGE:** Lake Services will consider the need for clearing debris and pruning existing damaged trees on an individual basis.

Duke Energy Shoreline Regulations (Cont'd)

- **FALLEN TREES:** Trees that fall in the lake and don't block or restrict navigational access should be left in place to benefit fish and wildlife.

Clearing & Pruning Outside Of Approved Viewsheds

- **CLEARING:** Without written permission, no clearing, thinning, spraying, planting, or sowing of vegetation below the 804, except to remove (a) standing trees in imminent danger of falling on a person or structure, or (b) non-native invasive or poisonous plants.
Duke encourages leaving large dead trees standing whenever possible.

- **PRUNING:** Individual trees may **not** be pruned except for approved viewsheds and access paths.

Oconee County's 25-Foot Natural Buffer

Oconee County's Lake Overlay District requires a natural vegetative buffer that extends 25-feet up Lake Keowee's banks from the 800-foot full pond contour. For lots with rip-rap or retaining walls, the buffer begins at the top of the stabilization.

***Buffer: [https://oconeesc.com/planning-and-zoning-home/
zoning-info/vegetative-buffer](https://oconeesc.com/planning-and-zoning-home/zoning-info/vegetative-buffer)***

Email: planninginfo@oconeesc.com Phone: 864.638.4168

Here's what you can and can't do within the county's protected buffer:

- **VIEW LANE:** Residential lots may be permitted lake view lanes not to exceed 15% of the total natural buffer. Impervious surfaces (like concrete) must make up less than 20% of the permitted lake view lane. All impervious surfaces are considered part of the view lane.
- **SILT FENCE:** During construction, a silt fence must be properly installed and maintained to protect the buffer from disturbance.
- **TREE REMOVAL:** Six-inch or greater diameter trees-measured 4-feet from base-can't be removed, unless deemed hazards or diseased by a certified arborist. Dead trees can be removed with advance approval.
- **LIMBING UP TREES:** Trees may be limbed up to 50% of their height, but an approved removal plan is required. If the County buffer lies below the 804 contour, Duke's no-pruning regulations would apply.
- **NATURAL PLANTS & MAINTENANCE.** No new manicured lawns or managed grasses are allowed. Clear cutting, mowing, fertilization, and use of all herbicides, fungicides, or pesticides is prohibited.