

*Lake Detectives: Students, Scientists, and Volunteers Tracking the Health of Smith Mountain Lake, VA*

Presented By: Ferrum College Water Quality Monitoring Program

Date: Saturday, May 31, 2025

Time: 12 pm – 1 pm

Location: Ferrum College, Ferrum, VA

Abstract/Description

The Smith Mountain Lake Water Quality Project (SMLWQP) at Ferrum College has been studying Smith Mountain Lake for almost 40 years! SMLWQP works with the Smith Lake Association (SMLA) and citizen scientists who live around the lake. SMLWQP scientists train regular people to collect data that is analyzed by scientists and technicians back in the lab at Ferrum College. The college students work as lab technicians under the direction of professors and staff. The lab studies nutrient levels, bacterial concentrations, algae populations, and other water quality indicators (like pH, dissolved oxygen, and temperature) from SML. An important outcome from the lab's work is to test the water to see how healthy the lake water is for swimming and other recreational activities. Two years ago, in the summer of 2023, a large population of algae caused a Harmful Algae Bloom (HAB) in the lake. This presentation will share the findings from the last sampling season (summer 2024) and the events from the 2023 HAB, as well as, how the student technicians and citizen scientists helped play a role in the lake monitoring project.

For more information about the program, visit their website.

<https://www.ferrum.edu/smith-mountain-lake-water-quality-program/>