

Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
Chair Sen. Mark Miller
Room 409 South
State Capitol
P.O. Box 7882
Madison, WI 53707-7882

Dear Senator Miller and Committee members,

Thank you for the opportunity to voice our support for SB 197.

Reducing and preventing phosphorus runoff is a top priority for lake management organizations. Even small amounts of phosphorus runoff can cause algae blooms and water quality decline, which are unpleasant for all of us who fish, boat, swim, and enjoy Wisconsin's lakes.

It takes 20 parts per million (ppm) of soil phosphorus to grow healthy turf; 25 parts per **billion** (a quantity 1000 times smaller) can promote excessive algae growth in lakes. Agricultural soils (see map *Soil Test P in Wisconsin agricultural soils*) in every Wisconsin county have at least 20 ppm of soil phosphorus; the average concentration is 53 ppm. Some counties have significantly higher concentrations, the highest being 160 ppm. Some estimate phosphorus levels in residential Wisconsin lawns have up to twice the amount of phosphorus (105 ppm) than the average farm field. The map (*Phosphorus in Wisconsin lawns*) summarizes results from Wisconsin studies of soil phosphorus levels in lawns.

It is easier to prevent phosphorus from entering our lakes than it is to manage the problems caused once excess phosphorus is in our lakes. It is more expensive and time-consuming to clean up a degraded lake than it is to keep it clean, safe, and healthy for everyone. 90% of Wisconsin's lakes are impaired or threatened by polluted runoff. Wisconsin's lake organizations invest private funds to help manage our public waters. Waterfront property owners are willing to do their part to prevent phosphorus from entering Wisconsin's lakes, but they need your help.

Many of our member lake organizations have been working to develop phosphorus free lawn fertilizer programs for their lakes or working with their town, village, or city governments to pass local phosphorus ordinances. Our members know using phosphorus free lawn fertilizer—unless a soil test confirms the nutrient is needed—is a common sense, simple, and cost effective way everyone can contribute to better water quality.

But local efforts—while widespread across the state—are not enough. Our members are calling for a statewide policy that would ensure consistency across the state for consumers, retailers, and suppliers. Although phosphorus fertilizer ordinances have passed in twenty-five cities, villages, and towns, without a consistent, statewide policy consumers may unknowingly violate local ordinances designed to protect local lakes by buying products in jurisdictions without similar ordinances.

Many counties would like to restrict the unnecessary use and sale of phosphorus lawn fertilizers, and strongly endorse a statewide approach based on Dane County's successful, existing model. To date, nine counties have passed resolutions to follow Dane County's lead on a statewide scale, with two more poised to pass resolutions this fall. Seven local governments and twenty-four statewide, regional, and local conservation groups have passed similar resolutions.

The map (*Support across Wisconsin*) highlights local activity related to phosphorus lawn fertilizer ban by county, and includes local groups working to pass resolutions, county resolutions, existing city, town, and village ordinances, and broad support for a statewide ban from responses to Conservation Congress questions at the April 2007 hearings.

As a statewide organization, we receive several calls a day thanking us for endorsing this bill and keeping our members informed about its progress.

This bill is one positive, easy step towards better management of phosphorus runoff and cleaner lakes for everyone. This bill simply makes the default choice for lawn fertilizer—phosphorus free fertilizer—the right choice for lakes.

Thank you for your continued leadership and support on this important issue.

Sincerely,

Tamara Jackson
Wisconsin Association of Lakes
Director of Communications