



# Wisconsin Association of Lakes

A nonprofit group of citizens, organizations, and businesses working for clean, safe, healthy lakes for everyone.

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Assembly Natural Resources Committee  
Chair Rep. Spencer Black  
Room 410 North  
State Capitol  
P.O. Box 8952  
Madison, WI 53708

June 2, 2009

Dear Rep. Black and Committee members;

We are pleased to testify in favor of AB 281. Reducing our use of phosphorus-based machine dishwashing products is an easy step to improve water quality and curb the avalanche of nutrients that are polluting 90% of our public lakes.

Preventing phosphorus runoff is a top priority for lake management organizations. Phosphorus is the fuel that transforms clear lakes into an algae laden, smelly green soup. Algae can make lakes unswimable, suffocate game fish, and choke out good plants.

When we use machine dishwashing detergents, significant amounts of phosphorus can end up in surface waters. Household wastewater from dishwashers either makes its way to a municipal wastewater treatment system or private septic tanks.

Municipal wastewater treatment plants collect wastewater from many homes and phosphorus is one of the pollutants that the treatment plant filters out before releasing the treated water back into the environment (which is often a river or lake). Unfortunately, phosphorus is extremely difficult to take out, and wastewater treatment removes only a small percentage of phosphorus. Phosphorus from dishwasher detergent had been identified as a major source of phosphorus into wastewater treatment plants. A considerable amount of phosphorus from households is released to streams, rivers, lakes and estuaries through wastewater effluent.

Controlling phosphorus discharged from municipal and industrial wastewater treatment plants is a key factor in preventing water quality decline. Washington State estimates that dishwashing detergent accounts for an estimated 10 to 12 percent of the phosphorus entering municipal wastewater plants. In Minnesota, phosphorus in dishwashing detergent accounts for about 19 percent of the total amount of phosphorus entering municipal wastewater treatment systems each year.

This doesn't only help our waters, it helps save us money. Phosphorus is a regulated pollutant under the Clean Water Act. Treatment plants are held accountable for phosphorus levels in their effluent. Reducing the volume of phosphorus in wastewater entering treatment plants means less expense to remove excess phosphorus and potential cost savings in infrastructure investments. Some treatment facilities have eliminated more than 50% of the phosphorus in raw wastewater via good source control.

The best way to protect our state's water is to avoid putting phosphorus into it to begin with. This bill is another common sense approach to better water quality.

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

Sincerely,

Tamara Jackson, Wisconsin Association of Lakes