



# 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

Dear Representative Black and Committee members,

Thank you for the opportunity to voice our support for AB 3.

Reducing and preventing phosphorus runoff is a top priority for lake management organizations. Many of our members have been working for years to develop phosphorus free lawn fertilizer programs on a lake by lake basis, asking retailers to stock phosphorus free fertilizer, and working with their town, village, or city governments to pass local phosphorus ordinances. But local efforts—while widespread across the state—have not been enough.

Nutrients like phosphorus—a common ingredient in lawn fertilizer—are degrading 90% of Wisconsin's inland lakes. Plants don't absorb more phosphorus than they can use, and excess phosphorus from lawns washes directly into our lakes and streams, causing smelly algae blooms, fish kills, and declining water quality.

Lakes and rivers can be extremely sensitive to small amounts of phosphorus runoff. Tiny amounts of phosphorus (as little as 25 parts per billion) can cause excessive algae growth in lakes. Preventing even small amounts of phosphorus from getting into the water can make a big difference. And it is much easier to prevent phosphorus from entering our lakes than it is to manage the problems caused once it gets there.

In addition, many undesirable (and expensive to manage) invasive species such as Eurasian water milfoil, curly leaf pondweed, and carp prefer nutrient rich waters. While not a prevention strategy unto itself, minimizing the amount of nutrients entering our waters may make conditions less ideal for some invasive species.

A growing body of research finds using phosphorus free lawn fertilizer is a common sense, simple, and cost effective way to reduce the amount of nutrients entering our waterways.

Wisconsin lawns and soils already contain adequate—and often excessive—amounts of phosphorus. It takes 20 parts per million (ppm) of soil phosphorus to grow healthy turf. Agricultural soils in every Wisconsin county have at least 20 ppm of soil phosphorus, with the average concentration being 53 ppm. Some counties have significantly higher concentrations, up to 160 ppm. Phosphorus levels in residential Wisconsin lawns have been estimated on average to contain twice the amount of phosphorus (105 ppm) than the average farm field. Soil testing of residential lawns across the state (see map) indicates that the vast majority of lawns already contains enough phosphorus to support healthy turf.

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. After decades of local efforts, Wisconsin lake groups, local governments, counties and citizens are calling for statewide restrictions on phosphorus in lawn fertilizer.

A statewide policy would ensure consistency across the state for consumers, retailers, and suppliers. Although phosphorus fertilizer ordinances have passed in thirty two cities, villages, and towns, without consistent, statewide policy consumers may unknowingly violate local ordinances designed to protect local lakes by buying products in jurisdictions without similar ordinances.

This simple, common sense bill doesn't result in any increased costs for consumers, retailers, or taxpayers. There have been no increased regulatory burdens or enforcement issues where it has been implemented. It just helps keep our waters a little cleaner. Using phosphorus free lawn fertilizer is a common easy way everyone can contribute to better water quality—regardless of where they live.

Passage of AB 3 would be a significant step forward in the efforts to curb the avalanche of nutrients that pollute our public lakes.

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

Sincerely,

Tamara Jackson

Wisconsin Association of Lakes