

State of the Lakes



Phosphorus Ban!

The Vermont Legislature just passed New England's first law prohibiting the use of lawn fertilizers containing phosphorus. Unnecessary use of phosphorus in lawn fertilizers has been shown to increase the amount of phosphorus running off from residential areas into lakes and streams, contributing to unwanted algae growth. Most lawn soils in Vermont already contain enough phosphorus for healthy grass without adding extra phosphorus fertilizer.

Several years ago, a group of organizations in the Lake Champlain basin began pooling resources and ideas to create the Lawn to Lake program. In addition to promoting the use of phosphorus-free fertilizer with the "Don't P on Your Lawn" message, this partnership created other healthy lawn tips and encouraged local retailers to stock phosphorus-free fertilizers.

Officials from Scotts Miracle-Gro Company announced they were changing their formula to help clean up pollution from storm runoff. Scotts took the step of removing phosphorus from its lawn products after research showed that it is not necessary for lawns, except ones that are just getting established.

Now, a bill (H.26) passed by the Vermont Legislature in May 2011 will prohibit the use of phosphorus fertilizers on most non-agricultural turf except when a soil test indicates the need for additional phosphorus or when using starter fertilizer to establish a new lawn. The law also prohibits the use of nitrogen fertilizer that contains less than 15 percent slow-release nitrogen. No fertilizer may be applied to an impervious surface, to frozen ground, within 25 feet of water, or to turf anywhere between April 1 and October 15. The Governor is expected to sign the bill, and the provisions will become effective on January 1, 2012.

To learn more about healthy lawns and lakes, visit the Lawn to Lake Program at: www.lawntolake.org/index.htm



Teaching Teachers about Urban Stormwater Run-Off



The Project WET, Water Education for Teachers, partners with the Lake Champlain Basin Education Initiative to offer a year long professional development training to teachers called [A Watershed For Every Classroom](#). In the spring 2011 session, Jim Pease from the Stormwater Section, took the teachers on tour of Englesby Brook in Burlington to teach about urban streams and stormwater run-off prevention. The ban on phosphorus in lawn fertilizer was also discussed.