

## **Washington State Lake Protection Association (WALPA) statement in support of SB 6289/HB 2744: Protecting lake water quality by reducing phosphorus from lawn fertilizer.**

Lakes are vital to the economy and environmental welfare of Washington State. Lakes are essential to the residents of Washington for critical water resources such as habitat for fish and wildlife, hydropower, aquifer recharge, drinking water, irrigation supply, and flood control. They also serve highly important functions for transportation, recreation, and as tourist attractions.

Phosphorus is one of the key elements necessary for growth of plants and animals; however phosphorus can cause harmful environmental impacts if increased amounts enter waterways. Negative impacts of excess phosphorus include, increased algae blooms, changing the lake ecosystem balance by decreasing the availability of dissolved oxygen for fish, changing predator-prey relationships and decreasing in water clarity. Although not all phosphorus stored in watersheds will reach lakes, only a small amount is needed to maintain or "tip" a lake into a nutrient rich (eutrophic) state.

Several Washington State lakes are experiencing rapid eutrophication due to excess phosphorus entering lakes through several pathways, the most common being the fertilization of lawn and turf. Adding phosphorus lawn fertilizer to soil that already has sufficient phosphorus to maintain a healthy lawn stimulates grass plants to produce roots and seed heads and not to produce additional green leaves which require nitrogen. Most soils in Washington have sufficient phosphorus in the soil to support lawns. Over application of phosphorus contributes to chronic nutrient loading problems in our lakes. This sensitivity of lakes and rivers to phosphorus means even small sources of phosphorus in runoff—that by themselves may seem inconsequential—can result in water quality problems as phosphorus from lawns, streets, farm fields, and other sources in the watershed wash into lakes. This proposed legislation will not create and adverse impact on lawn fertilizer use, will preserve this valuable resource for our agricultural needs, and will protect our water resources.

Changing land use patterns throughout a watershed can also increase the volume and rate of flow of runoff into lakes. In an undisturbed watershed, vegetation slows down runoff and water soaks into the soil. Development pressure frequently replaces lands that were once wooded or open space with lawns and hard surfaces (such as roads, buildings, and compacted soils). Water cannot penetrate these hard surfaces and runs off rather than soaking into the ground. Studies have indicated that lawns also significantly reduce infiltration of water, and increase both the amount of runoff and nutrients making its way to a lake.

WALPA has recognized the need to protect lakes, surface and groundwater and has adopted recommendations for that purpose. In an effort to reduce pollutants that contribute to algae blooms and water quality deterioration, WALPA is discouraging the use of lawn fertilizers that contain the element Phosphorus within the state. WALPA will cooperate with State and private entities to promote public education on the benefits of no phosphorus lawn fertilizers.