



Michigan's Phosphorus Fertilizer Law

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Phosphorus is the nutrient that most often stimulates excessive growth of aquatic plants, leading to a variety of problems known collectively as eutrophication. Elevated phosphorus levels are causing premature aging of many Michigan lakes.

In an attempt to address this problem, Michigan passed legislation several years ago that limited the phosphorus content of laundry detergents and more recently extended the ban to dishwater detergents. However, phosphorus in fertilizers remained a problem. Phosphorus is a key ingredient in many commercial lawn fertilizers and is commonly applied at rates well in excess of what is needed to maintain a healthy lawn. Excess phosphorus can run off into lakes and streams where a single pound of phosphorus can generate hundreds of pounds of aquatic vegetation.

With the passage of a new state law (PA 299 of 2010), Michigan has joined a number of other Great Lakes states in banning phosphorus in lawn fertilizers. The new law, which took effect on January 1, 2012, prohibits the application of lawn fertilizers containing phosphorus unless a new lawn is being established (and phosphorus is needed to promote root growth) or if a soil test indicates a soil phosphorus deficiency. The new law also regulates the application of lawn fertilizer near surface waters and prohibits lawn fertilizer applications on frozen ground or ground saturated with water.

Under the new law, fertilizer containing phosphorus can be applied on golf courses operated by staff members that have been certified by the Department of Agriculture as having completed training on best management practices for the proper use of phosphorus fertilizers. Agricultural fertilizer applications are exempt from regulation under the new law. Communities with existing phosphorus fertilizer regulations in effect prior to the enactment of the state mandate will be allowed to maintain their local regulations if they so choose. The state may impose civil or administrative fines on violators of the new law.

Act No. 299
Public Acts of 2010
Approved by the Governor
December 16, 2010
Filed with the Secretary of State
December 16, 2010
EFFECTIVE DATE: December 16, 2010

**STATE OF MICHIGAN
95TH LEGISLATURE
REGULAR SESSION OF 2010**
Introduced by Reps. Terry Brown, Scripps, Warren, Miller, Polidori, Sheltrow,
Gonzales, Espinoza, Smith, Donigan, Roberts, Kennedy and Meadows

ENROLLED HOUSE BILL

AN ACT to amend 1994 PA 451, entitled "An act to protect the environment, codify, revise, consolidate, and classify laws relating to the environment and the discharge of certain substances into the environment; to regulate the use of resources of the state; to prescribe the powers and duties of certain state agencies; to provide certain state remedies; and to repeal acts and parts of acts," by amending sections 851 and 852 of the Michigan Compiled Laws Act (Public Act 13 of 2008), section 8517 as amended by 2006 PA 503, and by adding sections 8512b, 8512f, and 8512g.

The People of the State of Michigan

Sec. 8501. As used in this part:

