

Lake Groups Welcome State's Efforts to Curb Pollution from Lawn and Household Products

May Seek Local Bans if State Legislation Fails

By Mirror Staff

Last summer, the Lake George Waterkeeper reported that algae blooms had developed on at least 26 sites around Lake George.

Now one of the leading contributors to algae growth — phosphorus in fertilizers and detergents — will be limited if a new bill is approved by the state legislature and signed into law by Governor Paterson.

"One pound of phosphorus can make 50 to 60 pounds of algae in a lake or pond," said Peter Bauer, Executive Director of the FUND for Lake George. "This state legislation would have a positive impact on Lake George where overall phosphorus levels have continued to rise due to poor lawn management, lack of stream buffers, poorly designed and managed septic systems, and high volumes of stormwater runoff. Limiting the amount of phosphorus used in fertilizers and in household cleaning supplies used primarily for dishwashing, is an important tool to help protect the water quality of Lake George."

The bill, introduced at the request of the state's Department of Environmental Conservation, would ban the sale of dishwashing detergents containing anything more than traces of phosphorus and prohibit the use of those detergents in commercial establishments by next July. The bill would also ban the use of most fertilizers made with phosphorus.

"It's important to limit the amount of phosphorus that is being loaded into Lake George," said Chris Navitsky, the Lake George Waterkeeper. "Each time it rains, stormwater loads phosphorus into the lake. A great deal of the phosphorus in fertilizers is being washed

into Lake George and is not being absorbed into the soils."

Excess phosphorus has long been identified as a major problem facing the lake, said Peter Bauer.

According to Bauer, the Lake George Park Commission published a report in 2001 that concluded, "The majority of phosphorus loading is from surface water runoff, with a disproportionate amount of runoff derived from developed area around the lake as compared to undeveloped (forested and agricultural) areas. Although developed areas only account for 5 percent of the land area in the watershed, they produce 43 percent of all the phosphorus that enters the lake as surface runoff. In all, the developed area account for almost 37 percent of all of the phosphorus that flows into the lake."

The report also calculated that Lake George receives 300% more phosphorus than it can naturally process.

"A healthy Lake George needs phosphorus to function. Excess phosphorus causes water pollution as natural aging processes are accelerated," said Bauer.

"Legislation to control phosphorus pollution from household cleaning products and lawn fertilizers is critical to help manage and reduce water pollution across New York. Lake George is enormously important to the local economy. In many ways, Lake George is the engine of the Warren County economy. The high property values, robust tourism season, sport fishing and boating industries, among others, all require clean water," said Peter Bauer.

If for some reason this legislation fails to win approval, The Fund for Lake George and the Lake George Waterkeeper might urge the Lake George Park Commission to curb the use of products with phosphorus on Lake George, said Navitsky.