



Dated: 3/2/11

## LEGISLATIVE ALERT – YOUR IMMEDIATE ACTION REQUESTED

### *Oppose The Fertilizer Phosphorus Ban Bill: HB 1489/SB 5194*

Yesterday afternoon the House passed ESHB 1489 restricting the use of phosphorus fertilizer on turf. The only way to stop this bill now is in the Senate. There are a handful of key Senators that will make all the difference.

If you live or do business in one of the eight districts listed below – or in a bordering district – please take a moment to call these Senators to let them know you oppose this legislation.

[Baumgartner](#) (R) – Dist. 6, Spokane  
[Fain](#) (R) – Dist. 47, Auburn - Covington  
[Hill](#) (R) – Dist. 45, Kirkland - Duvall  
[Litzow](#) (R) – Dist. 41, Bellevue, Mercer Island, Renton  
[Harper](#) (D) – Dist. 38, Mukilteo, Everett, Marysville  
[Hobbs](#) (D) – Dist. 44, Mill Creek, Snohomish, Lake Stevens  
[Kastama](#) (D) – Dist. 25, South Hill, Puyallup, Fife  
[Hargrove](#) (D) – Dist. 24, Port Angeles, Sequim

Two key points to be addressed are: Landscapers are trained professionals and such a ban would drive up the cost of fertilizer. Additional talking points are listed below for your easy reference.

The next hearing on this bill will be sometime after March 7. So please make your contacts now.

## Fertilizer Phosphorus Ban Bill Talking Points

### Introduction

- HB 1489 and SB 5194 seek to restrict the use of phosphorus in fertilizer on turf.
- Advocates of the bills are looking for solutions to decrease phosphorus levels in the state's waterways, but the bills singularly focus on fertilizers, ignore the vast majority of phosphorus sources and have no accountability language to target and measure results.

### Background

- **No Nexus Between Problem and Solution.** Less than 0.10% of Washington water bodies have high phosphorus levels according to Ecology. Many have little or no turf around them. One is on an

uninhabited island. There is no nexus between turf and elevated phosphorus levels in water. In fact, turf is an excellent filter. Agricultural best management practices often call for grass buffers along waterways to minimize erosion and the transport of pollutants into water.

- **Sources of Phosphorus.** Phosphorus gets into water from many sources and these bills ignore them. Decaying vegetation, leaves, failing septic or sewage treatment systems, pet waste and Canadian geese are major contributors. In Spokane where phosphorus levels are a major concern, less than 20% of the phosphorus comes from all non-point sources. The largest contributor by far is the city's wastewater treatment plant. A one-size-fits all approach won't give the desired results. Regulating something because it's easy without addressing root causes of the problem accomplishes nothing.
- **Inconsistent.** Organic fertilizer is exempt even though it is much higher in phosphorus. Limiting available products and leaving organic fertilizer on the shelf could result in an increase in phosphorus use.
- **Benefits of Phosphorus.** Phosphorus helps turf develop a strong root system that helps it absorb more rainfall, reduces runoff and acts as a filter to protect waterways from other contaminants. Turf with strong roots needs less irrigation to stay healthy. The phosphorus in fertilizer binds to the soil and does not move. Phosphorus from fertilizer only reaches water through erosion or through careless application to impervious surfaces.
- **Accountability of Proposal.** The bills fail to identify a method of accountability or a measurable goal to gauge effectiveness. In other jurisdictions where phosphorus fertilizer has been banned, University research shows no benefit was achieved.
- **Expertise is Ignored.** The bills fail to appreciate the training and expertise of the professional applicators who manage parks, golf courses and residential lawns. Most have degrees in agronomy and receive continuing education provided by Washington State University.
- **Bad for Business.** The new restrictions will require that fertilizer dealers reformulate and re-register their mixes, as well as printing new bags, tags and information sheets thereby incurring new costs at a time when many small rural dealers are struggling.
- **Effectiveness.** The bill includes no enforcement or monitoring to ensure accountability and effectiveness.

## Request

- Please do not pass HB 1489 or SB 5194.
- Education efforts are the most effective and efficient way to address the issue of phosphorus.

*Questions on any of the topics addressed in this "WALP Watch"? Contact the WALP Office at [info@walp.org](mailto:info@walp.org) or (425) 967-0729.*