

# Statewide Restrictions on Phosphorus in Cleaning Products and Fertilizers



## STATE OF MICHIGAN, DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

### *Nutrient Framework to Reduce Phosphorus and Nitrogen Pollution*

One way to reduce the amount of phosphorus entering Michigan's surface waters is to reduce the amount of phosphorus in products that commonly enter streams and lakes through point or nonpoint sources. Some of those products include cleaning products and fertilizers.

Michigan enacted a limit on the total amount of phosphorus in cleaning products in 1971, requiring no more than 8.7% of the product by weight to be phosphorus. Six years later, Michigan's phosphorus detergent ban was implemented, restricting the phosphorus content of household laundry detergents (e.g., laundry detergent and soap for hand-washing dishes) to no greater than 0.5% by weight.

Dishwasher detergent was not included in the 1977 ban because so few households had automatic dishwashers at that time. To be consistent for all dish soaps, the Michigan Legislature passed a ban that went into effect in 2010 to require dishwasher detergent meet the same requirements of 0.5% phosphorus by weight.



Dishwashing machine detergent.

The Michigan Legislature also passed a total ban on the use of phosphorus in turf grass fertilizers for most domestic and commercial uses. This statewide ban went into effect in 2012, after many local fertilizer ordinances had been enacted (Ann Arbor, Grand Rapids, Battle Creek, most of the Detroit Metropolitan Area, and Allegan, Bay, Muskegon, Ottawa, Roscommon, Saginaw, and Van Buren Counties).

The legislation was developed with a coalition of local and state government, industry, and environmental interests to protect water quality and to create uniformity across the local ordinances. As



of 2012, Michigan became one of the 15 states with bans on the residential and/or commercial uses of phosphorus containing fertilizer.

Exceptions that allow the use of phosphorus containing fertilizer on Michigan turf grass include; a recent soil test showing a need for phosphorus, new turf being established, a golf course with an applicator who has completed an approved training course, or if the product is a finished sewage sludge (biosolid) or manure-based product used at an acceptable rate.

The law also focuses on the appropriate use of all fertilizers and does not allow their application on frozen or water saturated soil and requires that fertilizer be cleaned off of impervious surfaces promptly. Additionally, a 15-foot application setback is generally required from surface water.

#### Additional Information

- A Webinar about the phosphorus fertilizer ban can be [found here](#).
- A copy of the fertilizer law can be [found here](#).
- Additional Information is also available at [Michigan's Department of Agriculture and Rural Development \(MDARD\) Fertilizer Program](#)

