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Limiting Phosphorus in Lawn Fertilizers to Improve Water Quality

Too much phosphorus is delivered to our waterways and is causing excessive plant and algae growth. One pound of phosphorus can produce 300-500 pounds of algae. Excess phosphorus in our waterways contributes to unsightly algal blooms, murky water clarity, weed-choked recreational areas, and low dissolved oxygen levels that harm fish and aquatic life. Recreational and water quality impairments from phosphorus pollution lowers property values, increases management costs, and threatens Wisconsin's multi-billion dollar tourism and outdoor recreation industry.

There are laws that work to reduce phosphorus from industries, wastewater treatment plants, and agriculture. There is another source of phosphorus that is unnecessary and controllable: fertilizers applied to lawns. The application of phosphorus lawn fertilizers often exceeds soil requirements, leading to a build up of phosphorus in the soil that poses a long-term water quality threat to Wisconsin's surface waters. Local governments in Wisconsin and the state of Minnesota have recognized the seriousness of the threat, and adopted controls affecting the sale and use of lawn fertilizers containing phosphorus.

This issue is of statewide significance and demands uniformity of regulation that transcends local jurisdictional boundaries.

BE IT RESOLVED, the Wisconsin Conservation Congress at its annual meeting held in Jefferson County on April 16, 2007, recommends that the Department of Natural Resources take appropriate action to advance language that limits or bans the use and sale of lawn fertilizers containing phosphorus. In addition, exceptions should be included for the establishment of new turf or when a soil test confirms a soil phosphorus deficiency.

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Signature of Land and Water Conservation Committee Chairman:



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County \_\_\_\_\_

Passed or Failed

County Resolution Number: \_\_\_\_\_

County Vote: (by show of hands or written ballot where appropriate) YES 22 NO 8