

## Phosphorus – What’s all the Fuss?

In nature, phosphorus usually exists as a phosphate molecule. It can be organic or inorganic.

Even a small amount of excess phosphorus can greatly impact the balance of a water-body. In excess amounts, it stimulates plant growth and algae blooms. The decomposition of these plants then reduces the available oxygen needed by fish and other aquatic life, causing stress, disease, suffocation and death. Excess plant growth and algae can impair the look of the lake as well as creating unpleasant odors and taste. In Song Lake, the potentially toxic blue-green algae thrive on phosphorus.

### **What are the Sources of Phosphorus?**

Human activity contributes a significant amount. Runoff from yard waste, erosion, septic, pet and livestock waste, detergents, cleaners, and fertilizers can all contribute excess phosphorus.

### **What can we do?**

- Read labels carefully and **avoid products containing phosphates**. Not all products labeled biodegradable are free of phosphates.
- Fertilize responsibly and use only **zero-phosphate fertilizer**, unless a soil test shows the need. Fertilize only in fall and never during wet weather. Never fertilize near drains or waterways.
- Create healthy lawns and buffer zones. Plant the correct grass mixes and Dutch clover. A low maintenance lawn will stabilize soils; **reduce erosion**, and slow runoff while filtering pollution. Consider a natural landscape that will prevent erosion using native plants along your shoreline.
- **Maintain your septic system**. Wastewater contains not only phosphorus but bacteria. Septic systems that are not properly inspected, pumped and maintained, can seriously contaminate our lake.
- Manage yard and pet wastes. Compost leaves, and allows grass clippings to remain in the lawn to provide a natural fertilizer.

### **Look for the “0” in the Middle**

