



STORMWATER MANAGEMENT COMMISSION



LakeCounty  
Health Department and  
Community Health Center

# Clean and healthy water starts with you!

## Phosphorus Reduction in Lake County

Phosphorus is an important element for plant growth that is found naturally in small amounts in streams, lakes, and wetlands. However, too much phosphorus can cause excess algae and plant growth, which can wreak havoc on aquatic systems.

Human activities add a substantial amount of phosphorus to streams and lakes. A watershed is the area of land that drains into a lake or stream. A body of water is affected by practices within the entire watershed. Even if phosphorus is not directly added to a lake or stream, it is carried into the waterbody via stormwater runoff. Excess phosphorus in streams and lakes can have many negative consequences.

- **Algal Blooms:** Phosphorus can cause rapid algal growth. While algae is an important part of aquatic ecosystems, excess algae can reduce waterbody aesthetics and increase flood risks by inhibiting drainage of stormwater runoff.
- **Fish Kills/Die-offs:** The dissolved oxygen in a body of water is used up as algae die and decay. If a fish population does not have access to enough dissolved oxygen, many fish can die.
- **Human and Pet Health:** Some algae can produce harmful toxins.
- **Invasives:** Phosphorus can increase invasive aquatic plant growth, which can restrict recreational activities, clog drainage pipes, and harm native plants and fish.



Native plants not only help improve water quality by filtering stormwater runoff, but they also provide pollinator habitat, offer beautiful scenery, and minimize soil erosion by stabilizing the ground.

Learn more at <https://www.lakecountyil.gov/3548>

### *Follow these best practices...*

- Keep yard waste, such as grass clippings and leaf debris, out of gutters, streets, ditches, and streambanks.
- Pick up pet waste promptly.
- Slow the flow of stormwater runoff using best management practices (BMPs) such as rain gardens and rain barrels.
- If you live near a body of water, leave a buffer of native plants between your home and the water to reduce stormwater runoff, erosion, and geese droppings.
- Wash your car at a commercial facility instead of your driveway.
- Pump septic tanks every two or three years. Aerobic treatment units need to be inspected at least two times per year.

### *...and fertilize wisely!*

- Test your soil to assess the amount and type of fertilizer it needs (if any).
- Only use the minimum amount of fertilizer necessary.
- Use phosphorus-free fertilizer. Find the three numbers on your fertilizer bag indicating the Nitrogen-Phosphorus-Potassium nutrient amounts. A phosphorus-free fertilizer will have a zero as the middle number.
- Only apply fertilizer once a year. Early fall is the best time. Avoid applying fertilizer before heavy rain as it can wash away.
- Sweep up leftover fertilizer on sidewalks and driveways and dispose of it properly in the garbage.

*Talk to your family, friends, and community members about adopting sustainable practices!*