

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

By E. PAUL ECKHOLM, CGCS AND GREG HUBBARD, CGCS

Senate File #1555 was amended and heard at the Natural Resources committee meeting on Thursday, February 14, 2002 at 9:00a.m. In attendance was Doug Carneval, MGA lobbyist, Larry Vetter, MTGF Executive Director, and Greg Hubbard from the MGCSA.

This bill deals with the application of phosphorous via blended turf fertilizers on a state-wide basis to set a standard for dealing with phosphorous use in Minnesota. It is commonly felt that limiting the use of phosphorous will help clean up our water bodies by limiting phosphorous-induced algae growth.

The bill proposes that a limit of 3% phosphorous be applied outstate and 0% (zero) be allowed in the seven

county metropolitan area of Minneapolis-St Paul. Keep in mind that communities may enact ordinances which are more stringent than those proposed by state law. Three exceptions are available to this prohibition:

1. When soil or tissue tests indicate a lack of phosphorous.
2. During the first growing season for sod or seed.
3. When used on golf courses by a licensed, trained professional.

The bill also prohibits application of phosphorous fertilizers to impervious surfaces, provides for educational materials at points-of-sale, encourages research into urban stormwater runoff,

and defines violation of this law as a petty misdemeanor. The bill is proposed to take effect January 1, 2004. The bill passed the hearing almost unanimously and was forwarded to the Senate Agricultural Committee for further hearings.

Surprisingly, little opposition was formally presented at the hearing. MNLA Executive Director Bob Fitch was present and voiced concern over the preemption of golf courses and not lawncare operators to me, but never testified. Representatives from RISE testified, but Scotts was noticeably quiet. The University of Minnesota submitted clarifications of comments made at an earlier hearing.

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