

Twin cities target phosphorus fertilizers

MINNEAPOLIS — Beginning Jan. 1, 2002, commercial lawn care applicators will no longer be allowed to use turfgrass fertilizers containing phosphorus here. City council

members, citing the need to protect lakes within city limits, approved the ban Sept. 28. Minneapolis followed the lead of surrounding suburbs that have also banned the

use of phosphorus-containing fertilizers. As of this writing, lawmakers in the City of St. Paul were considering similar action.

The opposition speaks

Both the Minnesota Nursery Landscape Association (MNLA) and Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment (RISE) are opposing this city-by-city effort to restrict the efforts of commercial applicators.

"The ordinance is wrong on the facts, and it's wrong on the science," says Jim Skillin, manager of formulator issues for RISE.

"They're doing this because they think it's going to improve the water quality in their lakes, but it's not. In the long term it will impair water quality. The turf will get thinner and there will be erosion and more runoff."

In unsuccessfully trying to head off the ordinance, Skillin asked council members "to conduct a little research on the subject of inorganic phosphorus in lawn fertilizer products." He told them that inorganic phosphorus from turf fertilizer reacts with the soil and doesn't travel far within the soil. He said a bigger problem is organic phosphorus leaching out of dead vegetation.

MNLA executive director Robert Fitch says his group opposes the "patchwork quilt" approach that each community is taking in regards to the issue.

The Minneapolis ordinance also covers retailers that sell turfgrass fertilizer. After Jan. 1, lawn fertilizer displays containing phosphorus will be limited to 10% of the quantity of non-phosphorus lawn fertilizer on display.

— Ron Hall



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Correction

The contact number for Terry Foley of Foley Enterprises, Austin, TX, was incorrectly listed in the September issue of *Landscape Management*. The correct number is 888/623-7285. We regret the error.