# Westford's Healthy Lakes and Ponds Collaborative

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TOWN OF WESTFORD

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## What is the Healthy Lakes and Ponds Collaborative ?

**Burge's Pond at East Boston Camps in Westford**

The Westford Healthy Lakes and Ponds Collaborative (WHLPC) is a group of interested parties that have come together to help improve and maintain the health of Westford's Lakes and Ponds.

The group is made up of representatives from several lake and pond associations, several town department staff, and residents.

The Collaborative shares a common goal to preserve Westford's important natural resources and protect our bodies of water.

The WHLPC has formed in response to the deteriorating conditions at some of our water bodies such as invasive aquatic plants, fish kills, visible algae blooms, and nutrient overload concerns that have required the closing of beaches and water recreational activities in town. Our hope is to prevent and reduce some of these deteriorating conditions in our water bodies by providing education to the community. Each person and every small change can make a difference in preserving our water supply.

## What is the collaborative doing to help Westford?

The Westford Healthy Lakes and Ponds Collaborative (WHLPC) applied and was approved for community preservation funding to assist in ensuring the health and quality of many of Westford's recreational water bodies.

The increased development of the town and its population growth have added demands and stresses on these water bodies, and recent studies in several water bodies have identified a number of management challenges for their preservation.

The three main components of the proposed project are as follows…...

1. A multi-faceted educational campaign, designed to inform residents of the impacts they have on the water bodies and the practices they can undertake to reduce nutrient and pollutant flow to the our water bodies. The education campaign will include newspaper articles, public service announcements, website information, and available printed materials to show what measures can preserve, protect, and enhance our ground water for the future.

2. Baseline studies, including water quality sampling and aquatic vegetation studies in lakes and ponds that have not previously been studied to assess their current health to identify any threats or problems which may be compromising their short or long term health. These studies will assist with developing recommendations for management practices.

3. Based on evaluations of newly studied ponds and historical reports regarding lakes and ponds that have had ongoing evaluations and treatments, an overall Lakes and Ponds Management/Preservation Plan will be developed that will provide future direction for the most effective water quality studies and treatments.

# Why is this important?

Both phosphorus and nitrogen are essential nutrients for the plants and animals that make up the aquatic food web. Since phosphorus is the nutrient in short supply in most fresh waters, even a modest increase in phosphorus can, under the right conditions, set off a whole chain of undesirable events in a stream including accelerated plant growth, algae blooms, low dissolved oxygen, and the death of certain fish, invertebrates, and other aquatic animals. There are many sources of phosphorus, both natural and human. These include soil and rocks, wastewater treatment plants, runoff from fertilized lawns and cropland, failing septic systems, runoff from animal manure storage areas, disturbed land areas, drained wetlands, water treatment, household products, and commercial cleaning preparations. (EPA.gov)

In addition, algal blooms can result in a closure of a beach, recreational activities, and can be harmful to animals and humans. The longer we wait to make proactive efforts to address, educate, study, and manage our water bodies, the more difficult it will be to preserve or restore their values.

# How can I help or make a difference?

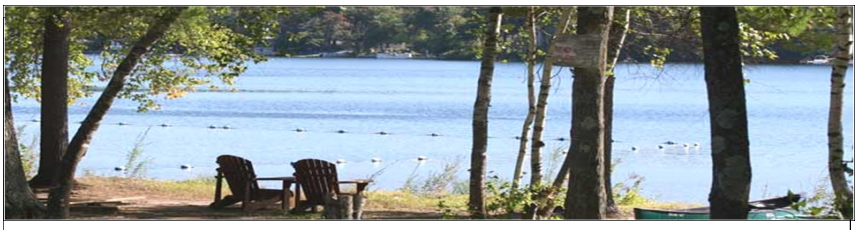
*Burge's Pond at East Boston Camps*

- Never discard yard or animal manure waste down storm drains or into waterways.
- Make sure your lawn contractor is not overfilling their seed and fertilizer hoppers in the driveway or in the street. Overflow can run off into the storm drains and end up in the lakes and streams.
- Do not discharge laundry, car, or boat washing detergent into the storm drain or to a body of water.
- Maintain your current septic system regularly by having the septic tank pumped every 2-3 years.
- Remove all plants from your boat motor, trailer, anchors, fishing gear, dive gear and dispose of them on dry land, away from the water.
- Never release non-native animals or plants into a body of water.
- Use phosphorus-free household products, detergents, and lawn products.
- Keep animal waste away from the water bodies and storm drains.
- Mow 2.5-3 inches high with a sharp blade to encourage dense growth and deter weeds.
- Avoid overfeeding your lawn by calibrating your spreader to avoid overfeeding your lawn.
- Don't discharge or dispose Hazardous Materials, trash, or other waste near storm drains and water bodies.
- Check with your mulch supplier about what products are used to stain the mulch. Some mulch products are stained with dyes that can be toxic to the skin, lungs. The toxic dye can leach into the ground.
- Ask your mulch supplier if the chips are treated or dyed with any products that are harmful to people or pets.
- Do not use CCA-pressure treated wood chips as a mulch layer.
- Leave your grass clippings on the lawn to lessen the need for fertilizer. Water deeply and infrequently to avoid evaporation and runoff. Sweep up any excess fertilizer and clippings.

# What are some names of products that are phosphorus-free?

**How can I tell if the product is phosphorus-free?**

Look for lawn fertilizers with zero phosphorus in them. On the bag or box of fertilizer is a row of three numbers. These numbers indicate the amount of total nitrogen (N), available phosphate (P2O5) and soluble potash (K2O) in the particular product. The middle number is available phosphate and should read "0."



Summer Village

Some examples of phosphorus-free company products…...

1. Sun and Earth
2. Seventh Generation
3. Trader Joe brand name products
4. Earth-Friendly Products
5. Palmolive Eco
6. Bi-O-Kleen
7. Citrus Magic Gel
8. Ecover Tablets
9. Shaklee
10. Most lawn weed and fertilizer products sold in MA.

*This list is only meant to provide some examples of phosphorus-free products. It is not an all-inclusive list. We do not recommend or encourage any particular product.

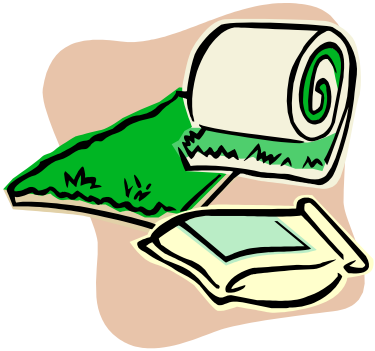
***" Our common goal is to preserve Westford's important natural resources and protect our bodies of water."***

# Where can I find phosphorus-free products?

Some local businesses offering phosphorus-free and organic products…

**Phosphorous-Free Fertilizers**

- Ace Hardware Westford
- McKay's Hardware Westford
- Cataldo's Nurseries Littleton
- Home Depot Nashua, Nh.
- Lowe's Home Improvement Lowell
- Chelmsford Away Chelmsford



**Phosphorous-Free Housecleaning products**

- Market Basket in Westford
- Trader Joe's Acton
- Ace Hardware Westford
- Mackay's Hardware Westford

**Organic Mulch**

- D R Mulch Garden Center

*This list is only meant to provide some examples of businesses that offer phosphorus-free products. It is not an all-inclusive list.

# How can my simple changes have an impact?

As a community we can reduce our impact of nutrient overload to our water bodies by making some simple changes.

Simple changes such as using or converting to phosphorous-free lawn, carwash, and house-hold cleaner products can reduce the phosphorous and nutrient loads that enter our water bodies.

Managing and properly discarding animal waste from chickens, cows, pigs, and horses can help eliminate potential run-off from entering the storm drains and water bodies.

Too much phosphorous and nutrient rich products cause water pollution by increasing algae stimulation and resulting in oxygen depletion. It will lead to fish kills and algae blooms.

Phosphorus can get into the water by surface runoff from lawns, and storm drains. When it enters the water body it stimulates the growth of algae. Your help makes a difference.

**Stone Arch Bridge by David Fingerhut**

**For more information please contact the Westford Health Department at:**

**Westford Town Hall**
**55 Main Street**
**Westford, Ma. 01886**
**Phone: 978-692-5509**
**Fax: 978-399-2558**
**E-mail Contact:**
**dmaccaughey@westfordma.gov**

**Visit our WHLPC's website at:**
**http://westfordma.gov/hlpc**

**For additional information visit these websites..**

- **For a list of Massachusetts Organic Landscaper**

**http://www.organicfertilizer.com/landscapers**

- **EPA's environmental safe labeling program**

**http://www.epa.gov/dfe/pubs/projects/formulat/saferproductlabeling.htm**

- **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Household products database**

**http://householdproducts.nlm.nih.gov/index.htm**

- **Algae Blooms and Cyanobacteria Information. Visit the Massachusetts Department of Public Health website at:**

**http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov/departments/dph/programs/environmental-health/exposure-topics/beaches-algae/algae-information.html**

Postage

**Resident's Address**