



# DANE COUNTY

**Kathleen M. Falk**  
County Executive

## Lakes & Watershed Commission

**Susan A. Jones**  
Watershed Management Coordinator

### **Why has the Commission proposed an ordinance to limit phosphorus in lawn fertilizers to 0%?**

Credible scientific studies show that there is 3 times more phosphorus in Dane County lawn soils than what is needed. The majority of lawns don't need additional phosphorus. Dane County lawns need nitrogen, not phosphorus, to prosper and grow. It will take years to draw down the phosphorus content in lawn soils, so there is no point in adding more.

However, the Commission recognizes that there will be instances where phosphorus is needed; for example, in the establishment of new lawns. Under the ordinance, if a landowner believes a lawn needs additional phosphorus, a soil test, currently costing \$15, will be needed to confirm that the soil lacks phosphorus. A landowner may then purchase phosphorus-containing fertilizer without another soil test for up to 3 years.

### **What good is this ordinance going to do?**

This is a one of a series of small steps needed to improve the health of our lakes. Many farmers have spent a significant amount of money to implement best management practices in an effort to keep phosphorus out of our lakes. It is essential that the urban community pitches in and helps.

Experts have estimated using zero phosphorus lawn fertilizer will result in an additional 1-5 days per month of low-algae conditions in the lakes.

### **What support has the proposed ordinance received?**

After the County Executive asked the Lakes and Watershed Commission to develop an ordinance to reduce phosphorus in our lakes by phasing it out of lawn fertilizers, the Commission held a public hearing on the phosphorus phase out plan on December 11, 2003, and also encouraged comments through its website. 169 county residents and 3 non-county individuals registered in support of the ordinance while 37 county residents and 31 non-county individuals opposed it. A number of organizations have registered support, including the Department of Natural Resources Water Division Administrator, the Dane County DNR fish manager and 12 civic groups.

*---prepared by the Dane County Lakes and Watershed Commission 3/23/04*

