



Long Island Group



April 16, 2018

Respected NY State Assembly and Senate members,

The Sierra Club is one of the nation's largest and oldest organizations whose mission is to explore, enjoy and protect the planet and all its living things.

The Long Island Group of the club, an all-volunteer entity, concerns itself with things that can affect what happens here on Long Island. The composition and use of fertilizers is certainly one of those things. For this reason, we are writing to support passage of A10276 and S8170.

Specifically, these bills prohibit the sale and use of high nitrogen, water soluble fertilizer in Nassau and Suffolk Counties and prohibit companies that apply fertilizer from using them. After the effective date of the laws, non-agricultural fertilizers sold or used must contain a minimum of 50% water *insoluble* nitrogen (i.e. slow release nitrogen), and total nitrogen of no more than 12% by weight.

These bills, if made into law, would make it easier for us to restore our water bodies to the clearer, less toxic state they once were in. Currently, high nitrogen water soluble fertilizers provide too much nitrogen too quickly for the plants to absorb it all. The excess either runs off the land when a large amount of water is applied (e.g. heavy rain or sprinklers running too long) or it seeps down below the plant roots into our subsurface waters. Either way, it winds up in streams, ponds, lakes and bays where the nitrogen feeds algae which lately have been growing too often, too widespread and too fast. Brown algae prevent the sun's rays from passing through the water to the grasses killing them off along with the life forms they support. The loss of grasses then contributes to hypoxia. Red algae can be highly toxic to some forms of sea life, most forms of wildlife, to pets and even to humans if it gets in their mouth. Nature already provides enough fertilizer for the periodic growth of these algae. We must not continue to make it worse by using the wrong fertilizer.

Fortunately, this is a problem that can be addressed with virtually no cost to either the state or the homeowner, and without sacrificing lush, green, healthy lawns. Many fertilizer manufacturers already produce low-nitrogen, water insoluble products that release nitrogen over a period of time so that plants can absorb it resulting in less nitrogen run off and less transmission of nitrogen down into our subsurface waters.

New York State already restricts phosphorus in lawn fertilizers and laundry detergents to prevent pollution of our waters (drinking and surface), so this concept is not new. It is consistent with existing law.

Finally, efforts to keep our surface waters in a state that can support water dwelling organisms support Governor Cuomo's multi-million dollar initiatives to revitalize the shellfish industry on Long Island.

Respectfully submitted –

Jane Fasullo
Chair of the Sierra Club Long Island Group