

SIMPLE WAYS TO REDUCE PHOSPHORUS POLLUTION

THE PROBLEM:

Phosphorus is an essential element for all living things, but phosphorus is also the primary nutrient polluting Minnesota surface waters. Too much phosphorus contributes to excessive growth of algae. As the excessive algal growth dies, the decay process uses up oxygen in the water, which can lead to fish kills.

The City of Big Falls Wastewater Treatment System currently discharges relatively low phosphorus levels, compared to the state average for pond systems. However, there may be new MPCA discharge standards on the horizon that the city may be forced to meet. Upgrading the city's treatment process would cost residents a tremendous amount of money. Therefore, reducing the amount of phosphorus being sent to the treatment ponds is in everyone's best interest.

Two significant sources of phosphorus in wastewater are dishwasher detergents and food waste (garbage disposal waste.) Fortunately, the phosphorus contribution from dishwasher detergents and food wastes are easily reduced.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:



Choose low and non-phosphorus detergents. Most popular dishwasher detergent brands contain anywhere from 4 to 9 percent phosphorus, which is as much phosphorus as common garden fertilizers. Check the label and choose a brand with a lower phosphorus content (usually expressed as “phosphate” on the label.) For a phosphate-free detergent alternative, mix 1 cup of borax with ½ cup of baking soda.

Reduce detergent use. Most people use too much dishwasher detergent. The amount of detergent needed depends on the water hardness. For “hard” water, more detergent is required. In general, the dispenser cup only needs to be filled full for heavy loads washed in hard water. Running full loads will reduce detergent use as well.

Place food waste in the garbage. Before washing, scrape food from dishes into the garbage. Also, minimize garbage disposal use in the kitchen. Most food wastes are quite high in phosphorus, especially potato peels and meat products. The ground up particles from these wastes increase phosphorus concentrations in the wastewater.

**Help maintain our beautiful river.
TOGETHER, WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE.**

*For more information about reducing phosphorus pollution,
please call the City of Big Falls at 218-276-2282.*