LAKE MASSAPOAG
ADVISORY COMMITTEE
90 SOUTH MAIN STREET
SHARON, MASSACHUSETTS 02067
lakecommittee@townofsharon.org

Dear neighbor,

As spring is here, we're writing to share how using lawn fertilizers with phosphorus negatively impacts Lake Massapoag and what you can do to help.

The problem
Phosphorus and nitrogen are often added to lawn fertilizers to help promote healthy grass growth. Unfortunately, heavy rains wash lawn fertilizer into our lake, which causes algal blooms and an overabundance of cyanobacteria. This type of bacteria can release toxins into the water and those toxins are harmful to humans and animals - in fact, dogs can die when they ingest it. In past years, it's also caused our lake to be shut down during beautiful summer days.

The excessive algae growth also leads to a decrease in oxygen levels in the water. This can cause fish and other aquatic life to die off, and if it continues the lake will stop supporting aquatic life altogether. Climate change is exacerbating this problem because high water temperatures also encourage algal blooms. Lake eutrophication will happen without action.

How you can help
One simple way is to follow the law and regulations in MA and use fertilizers that are phosphorus-free. Purchase fertilizer where the middle number for phosphorus is zero, such as 14-0-14 or 15-0-15. Also don't over fertilize! Many lawns can get by with using half the recommended fertilizer, fertilizing only once a year (fall is better for the lake), or not fertilizing at all. If you're unsure, have your soil tested and only apply the deficient nutrients. Testing is available from the UMass Amherst Soil and Plant Nutrient Testing Lab for only $20.

If you use a lawn care service
Tell your lawn care company that you want them to use a phosphorus-free fertilizer, they can also test your soil. Lawn services in town should be using no phosphorus fertilizers (except for new lawns or lawn repair), and can accommodate your request.

It takes EVERYONE to care for Sharon's most valuable natural resource. Please take action.

Sincerely,

Laura Henze Russell
Lake Massapoag Advisory Committee

P.S. If you'd like to learn more about our lake and what you can do to protect it, please visit: https://www.lakemassapoag.net/. For more on Lake Massapoag's phosphorus levels, see our Dashboard, which shows elevated phosphorus levels in 39% of lake and inflow samples.