

## 14 Mile Watershed Committee Lawn Fertilizer Recommendations

The 14 Mile Watershed Committee is a public led advisory committee that was reconfirmed by the Tri Lakes Management District at its 2017 annual meeting. It is made up of private citizens representing Lakes Camelot, Sherwood, Arrowhead and Petenwell as well as citizens at large, representatives of the Town of Rome, Wisconsin DNR, and Adams County Land Conservation. The objective is to improve water quality in our Town's lakes and streams, realizing that there are a number of contributing factors including but not limited to upstream agriculture, shoreline erosion, fertilizer application, septic systems, and water flow.

The committee seeks to build upon various groups to partner in its endeavor to improve water quality and the health of the lakes and streams in the 14 Mile Watershed. Groups identified to lead this effort include the following:

Lake Sherwood Property Owners Association  
Lake Camelot Property Owners Association  
Lake Arrowhead Property Owners Association  
Petenwell and Castle Rock Stewards  
Town of Rome  
County of Adams

Several work groups have been formed within the committee and the following report has been issued by the lake friendly fertilizer program work group. Also included are current Wisconsin State Laws as well as Town of Rome Ordinances. As in any private land initiative, the best path to action is the individual landowner taking responsibility to be an environmentally conscientious steward.

### Lawn Fertilizer recommendations:

Lakes, stream, wetland and pond property buffer zones of 35 feet, required by state law, should be planted and not be fertilized

Soil tests should be done every three years to support fertilizer applications

Lake friendly slow release granular fertilizer should be used. Quick release granular or liquid fertilizer should not be used

Nitrogen applications should be limited to 1 pound 8 ounces per 1,000 square feet per application. No person shall apply lawn fertilizer that is labeled as containing less than 20% slow release nitrogen

Applications of lime will assist plants to take up more nutrients

Limit fertilizer applications to three times per year unless soil samples call for additional applications.

If clippings are not bagged two annual applications should be considered

If lake water is used for irrigation, two annual applications should be considered

Fertilizer should not be applied within 24 hours of forecasted significant rainfall

Irrigation systems should not be operated within 24 hours of a fertilizer application except for a lite application to introduce the fertilizer to the ground surface

Lawn clippings cannot be discharged into any drainage ditch, lake, stream or creek as regulated by Town of Rome Ordinance 9.08

Current Wisconsin State Laws

- State law requires a buffer zone of 35 feet around all inland lakes
  - A path, equal up to 30% of a lakeside lot, may be maintained for lake access
  - No fertilizer is to be applied on the buffer zone
- State and local laws requires fertilizer, granular or liquid, must be phosphorus free
  - An exception can be made for new lawns, agriculture applications and golf courses, if supported by a soil test
- All commercial applicators must have a Wisconsin Pesticide and Fertilizer Commercial Certification

Town of Rome Ordinance

**9.08 REGULATIONS FOR LAWN FERTILIZER APPLICATION**

- (1) **AUTHORITY:** This section is adopted under the authority of secs. 60.22(3) and 61.34(1), Wis. Stats.
- (2) **PURPOSE AND INTENT:** The Town of Rome finds that lakes and streams are a natural asset, which enhance the environmental, recreational, cultural and economic resources of the area and contribute to the general health and welfare of the public. The Board further finds that regulating the amount of nutrients and contaminants, including phosphorus contained in fertilizer, entering the lakes will improve and maintain lakes, streams, rivers and ground water quality.
- (3) **APPLICABILITY:** This Ordinance applies in all areas of the Town of Rome.
- (4) **DEFINITIONS:**
  - (a) Agricultural use means beekeeping, dairying, egg production, floriculture, fish or fur farming, forest and game management, grazing, livestock raising, orchards, plant greenhouses and nurseries, poultry raising, raising of grain, grass, mint and seed crops, raising of fruits, nuts, berries, sod farming and vegetable raising.
  - (b) Fertilizer has the meaning set forth in sec. 94.64(1) (e), Wis. Stats.
  - (c) Lawn fertilizer means any fertilizer, whether distributed by property owner, renter or commercial entity, distributed for nonagricultural use, such as for lawns, golf courses, parks and cemeteries. Lawn fertilizer does not include fertilizer products intended primarily for garden and indoor plant application.
- (5) **REGULATION OF THE USE AND APPLICATION OF LAWN FERTILIZER:**

(a) No person shall apply any lawn fertilizer within Town of Rome that is labeled as containing more than zero percent (0%) phosphorus or other compound containing phosphorus, such as phosphate, except as provided in sub. (6), herein.

(b) No person shall apply any lawn fertilizer within the Town of Rome that is labeled as containing less than 20% slow-release nitrogen.

(c) No lawn fertilizer shall be applied when the ground is frozen.

(d) No person shall apply fertilizer to any impervious surface including parking lots, roadways, and sidewalks. If such application occurs, the fertilizer must be immediately contained and either legally applied to turf or placed in an appropriate container.

(e) No person shall apply any fertilizer to any established natural buffer zones.

(f) No person shall apply any fertilizer within 35 (thirty-five) feet of any wetland, pond, shoreline, or ordinary high-water mark of any lake, river or stream as established by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

(6) **EXEMPTIONS:** The prohibition against the use of fertilizer under sub. (5), herein, shall not apply to:

(a) Newly established turf or lawn areas during their first full growing season.

(b) Turf or lawn areas that soil tests, performed within the past three (3) years by a state-certified soil testing laboratory, confirm are below phosphorus levels established by the University of Wisconsin Extension Service. The lawn fertilizer application shall not contain an amount of phosphorus exceeding the amount and rate of application recommended in the soil test evaluation.

(c) Agricultural uses, vegetable and flower gardens, or application to trees or shrubs.

(d) Yard waste compost, biosolids or other similar materials that are primarily organic in nature and are applied to improve the physical condition of the soil.

(7) **LAWN WASTE DISCHARGE REGULATED:** It shall be unlawful for any person to intentionally place, throw, or otherwise discharge lawn clippings into any drainage ditch, lake, stream or creek.

(8) **ENFORCEMENT:** The Town Board shall designate an agent who shall be responsible to act upon and enforce this Section.

(9) **PENALTY:** Any person who violates this section in the application of fertilizer at his or her residence shall be subject to a forfeiture of thirty dollars (\$30) per violation, plus court costs and fees. Any commercial fertilizer applicator, residential or commercial developer, industrial or commercial owner, or other person who violates this section shall be subject to a forfeiture of fifty dollars (\$50) plus costs and fees for the first violation within a twelve (12)

month period, one-hundred fifty dollars (\$150) plus costs and fees for the second (2<sup>nd</sup> ) violation within a twelve (12) month period, and three hundred (\$300) plus costs and fees for the third (3<sup>rd</sup>) and each subsequent violation within a twelve (12) month period.

**(10) SEVERABILITY CLAUSE:** If any provision or portion of this Section is ruled invalid by a court, the remainder of the Section shall not for that reason be rendered ineffective or invalid.