

**CITY OF WASHBURN**  
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## **Notice to Washburn Sewer Utility Customers on Phosphorus**

August 3, 2010

The City of Washburn Sewer Utility needs to reduce the amount of phosphorus discharged into Lake Superior from its treatment plant. Phosphorus is a naturally occurring nutrient that in excess can cause algae blooms. Algae blooms can deplete the supply of oxygen in rivers and lakes, endangering fish and other aquatic life. Algae blooms can also be toxic and negatively impact swimming and fishing, which could decrease tourism.

Currently, the City of Washburn is receiving a failing grade from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources for the amount of phosphorus that is discharged into the lake. Specifically, the current monthly average phosphorus limit is 1 milligram per liter. For 2009, the City of Washburn averaged 1.525 milligrams per liter.

New rules being proposed by the State of Wisconsin are recommending that the new limit for phosphorus be .005 milligrams per liter for treatment plants that discharge into Lake Superior. If these rules go into effect, significant and expensive modifications to the treatment plant need to be made, as the current plant does not have filtration systems that can meet this requirement.

Nonetheless, the first step for the City of Washburn is to get its phosphorus amounts below the current limits and to see how low we can get the phosphorus amounts before any possible required modifications to the plant. In order to accomplish this, we are asking all customers to review products they use that may contain phosphorus.

Phosphorus can still be found in some fertilizers, herbicides, and insecticides along with many cleaning supplies and detergents. Federal regulations have prohibited the sale of many products that once contained phosphorus, but there are still some products that exist that do contain it. Commercial customers may wish to review their Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) to see if any products used in operations contain phosphorus, and if so, see if there are alternative products that may be used that do not contain phosphorus.

It is our hope that the residents of the City of Washburn will help us to help protect the water quality of Lake Superior, and to also hopefully avoid more costly modifications to the treatment plant in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Scott J. Kluver'.

Scott J. Kluver  
City Administrator

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael D. Decur'.

Michael D. Decur  
Director of Public Works