

What the New Fertilizer Law Means to Residents

Perhaps you've driven past Mullica Hill Pond on route 322 in the summertime and noticed a heavy growth of aquatic plants and algae on the water. It is not a beautiful sight and the Pond Committee has been studying ways to clean up the water. Some of the remedies are very expensive but, relax, we are not asking for funds to help clean it up. This time, we received some unexpected help in the form of a new state law! How did this come about?

The fishing in New Jersey's beautiful and important Barnegat Bay has been declining for several years and fishermen and residents were becoming alarmed. Many studies into the cause revealed that too much nutrient was getting into the water which encouraged the plant growth. The source of the nutrient is run-off of fertilizer from treated land into the water. The New Jersey state legislature was prompted into action to help remedy this problem. Senator Bob Smith (D-Middlesex) and Assemblyman John McKeon (D-Essex) proposed legislation to regulate the use of fertilizers. Governor Christie signed the bill into law in January, 2011 (NJ PL 2011 A2290). Not only will this law benefit Barnegat Bay but it will also benefit all waters in the state including Mullica Hill Pond and the Raccoon Creek watershed that feeds the pond. .

The provisions of the "Fertilizer Law" are that it:

- Establishes a statewide standard,
- Requires professional fertilizer applicators be trained and certified,
- May not be applied from November 1 through March 1,
- May not be applied during or just before heavy rainfall on impervious surfaces,
- Restricts the amount of fertilizer applied (amount and concentration),
- Restricts the composition of fertilizers (nitrogen and phosphorous),
- May not be applied within 25 feet of any water body,
- Sets fines up to \$1,000 for improper use.
- Exempts commercial farms and golf courses from these restrictions.

The bottom line for residents is that professional landscapers who apply fertilizers must be trained and certified, only "approved" fertilizers may be used, they may be applied only "in-season" and away from water. This is a good law that will help Mullica Hill Pond become a scenic local attraction.