

June 2, 2008

Senate & Assembly Environment Committees

Trenton, NJ

RE: NJGIC Public Hearing Testimony regarding threat to Barnegat Bay from Pollution

Dear Committee Members,

It was a great opportunity to attend the recent Public Hearing on the health concerns for Barnegat Bay held in Forked River on July 30, 2009. It was an informative meeting that I thought thoroughly addressed the variety of issues impacting the bay. The public hearing referred to the overall nutrient loading situation of the Bay, and fully described the variety of sources from which nutrient loading is occurring and to address the bigger issues of water temperatures, overdevelopment, natural buffers loss etc. The resultant press releases and the news articles that reported on the meeting made me question if I they had attended the same public meeting. There was a resultant disregard for the experts' messages of numerous sources of nutrient loading and a targeted attack on fertilizers as the primary cause of pollution to the bay. There seems to be an allowed word substitution in the press releases and press articles where nutrient loading (runoff and leaching for all sources of nutrients including soils, wastes, leaves, old septic systems, etc) is replaced with the word fertilizers (those products used in lawns and landscapes). These inaccurate and misleading statements are unacceptable to the green industry professionals of NJ.

On behalf of the New Jersey Green Industry Council (NJGIC), we respectfully submit the following science based information about turfgrass management and fertilization:

- Overall Fertilizer Runoff from properly maintained lawns and landscapes represents a very small portion of the overall impact to the pollution runoff. University Studies (Watch study – Penn State) illustrates that runoff from properly maintained lawns carries very little nutrients off the turfgrass area.
- Phosphorus runoff: Research data from leading fertilizer producers (Scotts) notes that the amount of P that can be attributed in storm water runoff from properly managed lawns represents less than 1 %. This was recently reported in meetings with NJDEP as part of the Healthy Lawns Healthy Environment Initiative which has been supported and attended by various green industry leaders. Additionally, we can learn from the experience of the phosphorous (P) ban in Minnesota. The ban on P fertilizers has been in place since January 2004 but to date there have been no changes in surface water quality across the state. The only conclusion that can be drawn from the data is that specialty fertilizers were not a significant source of P to surface water.
- Nitrogen Runoff: Nitrogen runoff can be approximated by looking at consumer use data. _____ DIY people make less than two applications a year = around 1.7 lbs per 1,000 sq.ft. , which is less than most university recommendations (typically 3 to 4 lbs.). Turf is a very efficient at scrubbing nitrogen from the soil so there should not be significant leakage at these rates.
- Fertilizer Products: Fertilizers used by industry professionals and homeowners, applied correctly, are not creating all the pollution problems in the bay. As noted above they have a very limited role in impacting area waters if properly applied. Fertilizers are provided in a variety of products, promoted and supported by industry to help secure proper application for those less knowledgeable, however this should not be interpreted to mean that banning phosphorus or other elements of nutrients is recommended. Keeping turf healthy protects waters and all fertilizer combinations have value for various situations and are tools need to protect against soil erosion potential.
- Education: The industry committed to educating about proper turf and landscape care. NJGIC is committed to meeting with our states policy makers (DEP and Legislators) to

educate them on proper turfgrass and landscape management. Professional applicators are also committed to educating others that are seeking to address nutrient management issues such as Barnegat Bay Estuary Program leaders. NJGIC seeks your support in promoting education about proper application and use of Science based BMP's, as provided by Rutgers University Academia. We ask that any legislature going forward recognizes the importance of education about proper applications and that professionals be recognized for their knowledge and experience in managing the outdoor environments of the state.

- Certification: Responsible Applicators are in support of certification for professionals as long as they are based on science and they recognize long standing turfgrass management educational programs. Our green industry professionals are dealing with a patchwork of fertilizer regulations in various towns and now regional restrictions are pending. A statewide fertilizer ordinance is preferred that utilizes BMP's of Rutgers University.

NJGIC respectfully requests that you - our elected decision makers in Trenton - take the time to learn about the science based facts about fertilizer runoff prior to any further action. NJGIC members are professionals of all districts of the state and we offer our expertise to you to better help you make decisions that will better protect the Bay and the overall environment of NJ. We also encourage you to reach out to the Rutgers Turf Management program. It is a world renown for its turfgrass management program of studies. On staff is Dr. Jim Murphy, the turfgrass nutrient management specialist. He has been the key contact for many NJDEP programs addressing nutrient management issues and has developed Best Management Practices for turfgrass management, promoted by numerous programs of the state.

The NJGIC is an umbrella organization representing the interests of various sectors of the green industry including: Arborists, Golf Course Superintendents, Landscape Contractors, Lawn Care Providers, Nursery Growers, Sports Field Managers, Sod Growers, Structural Pest Managers, low voltage lighting professionals and IVM professionals. The council is dedicated to representing member interests on a broad range of industry regulations and legislative concerns. NJGIC seeks to provide facts and science-based information to facilitate reasonable regulation and legislative policy.

Sincerely,

Nancy Sadlon
NJGIC Executive Director