

No "Pho" in our H₂O

SB 200: An Act Banning the Sale of Phosphorus-Containing Household Cleaning Products

Sponsor: Senator Erickson

Phosphorus is a naturally occurring element, and an important nutrient for a healthy ecosystem. But too much phosphorus in our rivers and streams results in heavy algal blooms that degrade habitat and harm water quality.

Two decades ago, counties in the Clark Fork River watershed banned the sale of phosphate-containing laundry detergents, resulting in measurable improvements to the river's water quality. Now its time to support legislation that takes the next step to protect our water: banning phosphates in dishwasher detergents.

- Household cleaning products are one of the main unnatural contributors of phosphorus to our waters. Dishwashing detergents, in particular, contain anywhere from 4 to 8% phosphorus.
- This phosphorus permeates into our ground and surface waters through wastewater discharge, such as sewer treatment plants, septic systems, and storm drains.
- A recent study on Lolo Creek (8 miles south of Missoula) showed that at least 15% of the phosphorus in the creek originated from household cleaning products—and that was *after* the ban on laundry detergents.
- Several phosphate-free detergent brands are already available, including Seventh Generation, Trader Joe's and Ecover. The Soap and Detergent Association has agreed to produce more varieties by July 1, 2010, which is the date the proposed legislation would take effect in Montana.
- This bill would apply to counties where water bodies exceed the state's water quality standards for phosphorus and/or algal biomass—currently, only the Clark Fork River meets that criteria.
- The ban would only apply to household detergents, and provides exemptions for cleaning products used for commercial, agricultural or industrial purposes.
- Montana would join several states that have already passed bans on phosphate-containing cleaning products, including our neighbor, Washington, which adopted a phosphate ban to protect the Spokane River.

Questions? Contact Brianna Randall at the Clark Fork Coalition
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