Reducing Phosphorus in Long Lake
What You Can Do

What is Phosphorus?
Phosphorus is an essential element for all plant life, and just like on land, acts as a fertilizer when added to lakes.

Where Does it Come From?
Phosphorus comes from both natural and anthropogenic (human) sources.

Natural Sources: groundwater, plant decomposition, waterfowl waste, etc.

Anthropogenic Sources: Fertilizer, pet waste, runoff from lawns, faulty septic systems, lawn clippings, etc.

What Does Phosphorus Do?
Phosphorus supports life; however, too much phosphorus in lakes can cause harmful algal blooms, decreased water clarity and quality, degrade habitat for fish and wildlife, and impede recreation.

Reducing phosphorus runoff into Long Lake is crucial for maintaining water quality and preventing harmful algal blooms.

Photo credit: Jeff Linkenheld

As a shoreline property owner, here is a list of things you can do:

- Preserve existing natural vegetation and avoid removing trees, shrubs, and ground cover.
- Opt for fertilizers labeled as phosphorus-free to reduce the amount of phosphorus entering the lake.
- Apply fertilizers sparingly and only when necessary. Conduct soil tests to determine the exact needs of your soil.
- Minimize the amount of manicured lawn area and increase the area of natural vegetation.
- Apply mulch around garden beds and trees to help absorb rainfall and reduce runoff.
- Compost leaves, grass clippings, and other yard waste instead of disposing of them near the shoreline.
- Use permeable paving materials for driveways, walkways, and patios to allow water to infiltrate the ground.
- Install rain barrels to collect and store rainwater from roofs for later use in gardens and lawns.
- Direct downspouts away from paved surfaces and toward vegetated areas where water can be absorbed.
- Inspect and pump septic systems regularly to prevent failures that can contribute phosphorus to the lake.
- Upgrade old or failing septic systems to more efficient models that better process and reduce phosphorus output.
- Ensure the septic system’s drain field is well-maintained and not compacted, allowing for proper filtration.
- Do not dispose of pet waste, chemicals, or other pollutants near the shore.