

Fact Sheet: Phosphorus and Its Effect on Water Quality

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All living things need phosphorus to survive. Phosphorus is the 11th most abundant element in the earth's crust, and it can be found in fertilizers, soil, organic waste, and industrial effluents.

Human activities can cause excessive amounts of phosphorus to enter surface waters. When too much phosphorus flows into surface waters, it can cause excessive algae growth and a decrease in oxygen levels, suffocating fish and aquatic life.

The Ann Arbor Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) removes phosphorus from the wastewater it receives. However, the treatment process is limited in its ability to remove all of the phosphorus. To help control the amount of phosphorus discharged to the Huron River:

- Use alternative products inside and outside the home that do **not** contain phosphorus and are more environmentally friendly.
- Collect any waste materials that contain phosphorus (common materials—detergents and masonry cleaners) and contact Hazardous Material Management (HMM) using one of the following methods:
 - Call HMM at (734) 763-4568
 - Complete the online [Waste and Supply Request](#) form
- Prevent wastewater from entering storm water system and infiltrating into the ground, both of which drains directly to the Huron River without any treatment.

Supplemental Information

- [City of Ann Arbor Sewer Use Ordinance—Chapter 28](#)
- [Storm Water Management Program Plan \(SWMPP\) for the University of Michigan](#)