

Why is WALPA supporting legislation to ban the sale of consumer products containing high concentrations of phosphorus? WALPA is doing this to protect the water of our state and because there are effective alternative products that do not pollute into our lakes, rivers, streams and oceans by adding unnecessary phosphorus.

Many of the responses we have received on this issue ask why we are supporting a legislative solution rather than a public education approach. WALPA values education, and education and outreach on water resources issues are primary activities of our organization. However we are a group of citizen volunteers fighting for these issues on our own time, on our own nickel, and we face huge multi-national corporations and lobbying firms with far greater financial resources than we have. Which message will get out? WALPA will continue to work on education, but have these multi-national corporations stepped forward to educate the public on the chemicals and additives they've put into our food, our air, our water, and our bodies? Should we as citizens be required to be biochemists and toxicologist in order to make an informed choice on what laundry detergent, dishwasher detergent, or lawn fertilizer we should buy? Current use of these phosphorus containing products is statewide, the pollution the use of these products cause is statewide. The best way to protect our resources is to minimize the addition of phosphorus statewide, and legislation is the most effective tool to do this.

The scientific reason we are working to reduce phosphorus pollution is because it is the limiting nutrient in our waters, add more you will get more algae and macrophytes. Add more and we will have more frequent blue-green algae blooms, with higher potential lethal toxicity to pets and livestock, and these bacteria really make your drinking water taste bad. Blooms of algae from additions of phosphorus can cause dissolved oxygen crashes and fish kills.

To reduce the excess phosphorus from sources such as dishwasher detergent and lawn fertilizers going into our waters, we citizens are spending millions of public dollars on wastewater treatment plants that remove some of the polluting phosphorus in wastewater, but not enough to protect our waters. It is not cost effective, nor is it fair that the citizens of Washington should be asked to spend billions of dollars to reduce this pollutant so dishwasher detergent manufacturers can continue to sell their polluting products. By reducing the source of this pollutant by reducing its use, we can protect our waters and save millions of dollars of our money.

Reducing phosphorus in dishwashing detergent and still getting clean dishes has already been solved; it just needs to be implemented in Washington. The issue with the dishwasher detergent sold in Spokane is water hardness, the formulations the corporate suppliers stock in the stores in E Washington are a one formula fits all, shipped throughout North America. There are dishwasher detergents that work in hard water, and almost all of them work in soft water. But if people were to switch from one product to another, well there goes corporate profit down the street to another corporation.

The detergent industry is not concerned with the water quality of the State of Washington unless citizens tell them they have to be. These corporations have big lobbying firms with a bunch of high paid lawyers on K Street in Washington DC whose job is to spin issues like this to maximize profits for their corporate membership. WALPA does not view our efforts at passing legislation that does not allow these multi-national corporations to pollute our state as anti freedom, we view this effort as volunteer citizens fighting to protect our country and our environment. How many of the so-called detergent smugglers have sat down with their children and explained that they would rather leave them polluted lakes than figure out which dishwasher detergent to use?

We're not just arguing about just trees and fishes and swimming, this is about our drinking water, this is about protecting our agriculture, this is about protecting our pocketbook. This is about we citizens telling the multi-national corporations 'you cannot pollute our state'. This is a way we as citizens can take individual responsibility for our actions to protect our country. How can the 'freedom' to use dishwashing soap containing polluting additives be more important than that?