The Northeast Voluntary Turf Fertilizer Initiative

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New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission

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Tuesday, May 15, 2012
Presentation Outline

• History and Background
  – Nutrient Source Control
  – Existing State Laws on Turf Fertilizer

• Regional Voluntary Approach
  – Goals and Strategy

• Upcoming Stakeholder Meetings

• Challenges

• How to Get Involved
Initiative History

• NEIWPCC’s Executive Committee and NPS Workgroup began discussing nutrient source control strategies in 2009.

• The Theory: It is more cost-effective to prevent nutrients from entering water than it is to take them out of point source streams.
Nutrient Source Control Areas

• Waste Water Stream:
  – Phosphates in detergents (particularly dishwasher detergents)
  – Phosphate additives to drinking water (corrosion preventative)
  – Septic system leachate

• Runoff Stream:
  – Fertilizer runoff (agricultural and nonagricultural)
  – Animal waste (agricultural, pets, problem wildlife)
  – Soil erosion (construction, post-construction)
  – Atmospheric deposition
Step 1: Research

• What have states done to regulate nutrient runoff from turf fertilizers?

• Three regulatory angles:
  – Application, and/or
  – Retail, and/or
  – Formulation and labeling
## How do the laws work?

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A Regional Approach?

• **Pros:**
  – An even playing field for turf fertilizer stakeholders that operate across state lines:
    • Most manufacturers
    • Retail chains
    • Some professional applicators
    • Home applicators with multiple properties
  – Opportunities for unified outreach message

• **Cons?**
  – Political and logistical challenges
Initiative History, Part 2

- New England Governors’ Conference Committee on the Environment, May 2011
  - Agenda item: regional action on turf fertilizer (Mass DEP Commissioner Ken Kimmel)
    - Committee not ready to pursue regional legislation at this time
    - Requested a guidance-based voluntary approach coordinated by NEIWPCC
  - NEGC COE signed statement of intent in support of a voluntary approach in September 2011
Initiative Goal

• To engage industry and non-industry turf fertilizer stakeholders in the development of mutually agreeable and scientifically sound regional guidelines on the formulation, labeling and application of turf fertilizers
  – Formalization of guidelines through agreements with the states

Okay...but how???
Initiative Strategy

- Regional workgroup – NEIWPCC, states, EPA
- Series of stakeholder meetings
  - 1st and 2nd focused on formulation and labeling
  - 3rd focused on outreach to home applicators
  - 4th focused on pro application and sports turf
  - Possible “summit” event as initiative conclusion
Okay...but really...HOW?

- Identify and find contact info for various industry and non-industry stakeholders
  - State fertilizer manufacturer registries
  - Other state contact lists
  - Web search
- Develop workgroup vision for potential guidelines (based on legislation and technical guidance)
- Create web presence
  - Give it a real name and logo
Formulation and Labeling Meetings

• May 30th and 31st, EPA Region 1 in Boston
  – May 30th focus on synthetic products
  – May 31st focus on organic/natural/biosolid products

• Meeting structure:
  – Primary participants: fertilizer manufacturers, states and EPA
  – Secondary participants: all other stakeholders and general public
    • These roles will change in the upcoming meetings focused on outreach and application.
Why Separate Synthetics and Organics?

• We do not necessarily expect that organic/natural/biosolid producers will voluntarily agree to the same guidelines
  – Different production scales
  – Technical issues removing P

• Other ancillary environmental benefits:
  – Repurposing waste streams
    • Even bio-harvesting!
  – Local sourcing
  – Low input production
May Meetings: Agendas

• Introduction (what, why, how)
• Expert presentation
• Manufacturers’ Roundtable
  – Manufacturer experiences and with existing state laws
  – Manufacturer vision for outcome of regional initiative
  – Adapt the best of what’s worked and avoid the worst of what hasn’t
• Discussion of Regional Guidelines
  – State workgroup draft as jumping-off point
Challenges: Current and Future

• Finding industry contacts
  – Manufacturers: Product registration contact ≠ policy decision maker
  – Retailers: Contact information not readily available
  – Professional Applicators: Very, very many

• Turf fertilizer activity through two separate branches: executive and legislative

• NEGC merging with CONEG
Want to Get Involved?

• Check out our website: http://www.neiwpcc.org/turffertilizer.asp

• Register for the May meetings and/or future stakeholder meetings (dates TBD)
Acknowledgements:

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• RI DEM: Ernie Panciera
• VT DEC: Michaela Stickney
• EPA Region 1: Lynne Hamjian, Karen Simpson, Kate Renahan, Trish Garrigan, Ernie Waterman
Questions?

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Thank you!