



SENATE MAJORITY OFFICE

Oregon State Legislature
State Capitol
Salem, OR

NEWS RELEASE

March 30, 2009

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Senate votes in support of healthy waterways for Oregon

Phosphorus limitations expanded to include household dishwashing detergents

SALEM – Rivers, lakes, and groundwater will be better protected with legislation passed this morning by the Senate. Senate Bill 631 extends the state’s ban on phosphorus to include household dishwasher detergent.

“This is a great bill for cleaning up Oregon’s rivers, streams, and lakes,” said Senator Jackie Dingfelder (D-Portland), chair of Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee. “Phosphorus can cause a buildup of algae that ultimately leads to biological death in some waterways.”

When introduced to surface or ground water, phosphorus increases algae growth which in turn can reduce oxygen levels and kill aquatic life. This has caused major algae blooms on lakes in Oregon, including Woahink and Siltcoos Lake on the south coast. In 2007 the community between those lakes, Dunes City, passed an ordinance designed to reduce phosphorus deposits.

“Communities in my district have already recognized the damage that excess phosphorus can cause,” said Senator Joanne Verger (D-District 5), whose represents Dunes City. “It’s important to protect our waterways in order to support the local businesses that rely on our lakes and rivers while also preserving our natural resources for future generations.”

In 1991 the Legislature passed a law banning the sale of detergents that contain more than 0.5% phosphorus by weight. Dishwasher detergents, which can contain up to 8.7% phosphorus, were exempted from the law at the time. SB 631 removes this exemption for all detergents except for those used in commercial or institutional dishwashing detergent.

“This legislation is another example of Senate Democrats’ pledge to manage our water resources wisely,” said Senate Majority Leader Richard Devlin (D-Tualatin), who helped pass the first phosphorus ban in the state during his time as a Metro councilor from 1988 to 1992.

SB 631 passed 26-2. The bill will now go to the House for consideration.

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