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Lawn to Lake Connection

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The chemicals can be difficult to pronounce. But many people use them on their yards to kill bugs and weeds.

In Burlington if you live within 500 feet of Lake Champlain you need permission to spray pesticides and herbicides.

The goal is to limit the amount of chemicals that run off and pollute the water.

"This map shows where 500 foot buffer zone is in place," explained Kathleen Butler, the Burlington health officer.

And now Officials want to expand that buffer zone -- to make homeowners in the whole city have to get the ok before they spray.

"So the thought is that we would extend the requirement for permission to the entire city because really anywhere in the city you apply pesticides and herbicides it does end up having the potential to leach into the lake," said Butler.

Burlington officials say for right now, they're not considering an outright ban on the chemicals people use in their yards, instead when people come seeking approval to use them, they're recommending that they use natural alternatives.

"We need to be aware that actions in our backyards can affect water quality," said Nicole Ballinger with the Lake Champlain Basin Program.

Environmental groups support Burlington's idea, but add it's not just chemicals, but also fertilizers that people put on their lawns that create problems. They run into rivers and end up in Lake Champlain.

"Phosphorus feeds algae blooms, it makes your lawn green and can also make the lake green, so our big concern is to tell homeowners to use phosphorus free fertilizers," said Ballinger.

The state just started a campaign to educate people. At TrueValue Hardware in Waterbury, owner John Halloran received information about the project and decided to stock the shelves with phosphorus free fertilizer.

"I didn't know much about this before this," said Halloran, "but it seems to me a nice idea, not hard to deal with and a great alternative."

The product does not cost more and a study found most lawns already have enough phosphorus in them.

While some homeowners might not like to be told what they can or can not use on their yards -- others think it's worth it to help the Lake.

"I do think it's important, it's our water, we use it a lot," said Kateline Roberts as she sat by Lake Champlain.

[Kristin Carlson - WCAX News](#)



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