



**Town of Barnstable
Inspectional Services
Public Health Division**

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August 26, 2025

RE: Fertilizer Ordinance Reminder for Lakefront Residents

Dear Resident,

We are writing to remind you of the Town of Barnstable's Fertilizer Use Ordinance (Chapter 78), enacted to protect the health of our environment, drinking water, and natural resources.

Barnstable's sandy, glacial soils make our groundwater and surface water especially vulnerable to nutrient leaching. When nitrogen and phosphorus from improperly applied fertilizers enter our waters, they can accelerate nutrient enrichment (eutrophication), harming aquatic life, limiting recreational use, and posing serious risks to drinking water through increased nitrate levels.

Key Provisions of the Ordinance

To help protect our water resources, please follow these important standards:

- **Do Not Fertilize Between November 12 and March 31.**
- **Never fertilize before or during heavy rain** or when soil is saturated.
- **Maintain a minimum setback of 100 feet** from all water bodies (unless stricter rules apply or written permission is obtained).
- **Use fertilizers with at least 20% slow-release nitrogen.**
- **Limit nitrogen application** to no more than 1.0 lb. of actual nitrogen per 1,000 sq. ft. per application, and no more than 3.2 lbs. annually.
- **Phosphorus fertilizers are prohibited** unless a soil test (less than 3 years old) indicates a deficiency or you're establishing new turf.
- **Do not allow fertilizer or grass clippings** to be deposited on impervious surfaces or within 50 feet of water bodies or storm drains.

Certification & Best Practices

The ordinance requires all certified fertilizer applicators to follow the University of Massachusetts Extension's *Best Management Practices (BMP)* for turf care. If you hire a landscaper, we strongly encourage you to confirm they are certified or supervised by someone who is.

Educational Materials

An electronic copy of the full ordinance and helpful educational materials, including BMP guidelines and soil testing information, is available at:

<https://ecode360.com/29942593?highlight=fertilizer&searchId=6522503439468856#29942593>

https://www.umass.edu/agriculture-food-environment/sites/ag.umass.edu/files/pdf-doc-ppt/lawn_bmp_establishment_2016_final.pdf

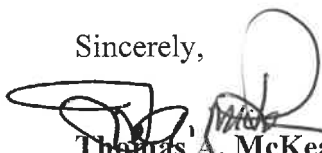
Enforcement & Penalties

Violations of the ordinance may result in a warning for a first offense and mandatory education or certification for a second offense. Repeated violations may incur fines up to \$300 per violation.

Please note that the Conservation Division is the enforcement authority related to fertilizer application within one-hundred feet to a waterbody. If you have any questions about this, please contact the Conservation Division at (508) 862-4093 or visit the Town of Barnstable's website for more information.

By following these guidelines, you help preserve the quality of water in our lakes and ponds for swimming, boating, wildlife, and as a vital resource for our region's environmental and public health.

Sincerely,



Thomas A. McKean, RS, CHO
Director of Public Health
Town of Barnstable