



James W. Ridgway, P.E.
Executive Director

Allen Park
Auburn Hills
Beverly Hills
Bingham Farms
Birmingham
Bloomfield Hills
Bloomfield Twp.
Canton Twp.
Commerce Twp.
Dearborn
Dearborn Heights
Farmington
Farmington Hills
Franklin
Garden City
Inkster
Lathrup Village
Livonia
Melvindale
Northville
Northville Twp.
Novi
Oakland County
Oak Park
Orchard Lake
Plymouth
Plymouth Twp.
Pontiac
Redford Twp.
Rochester Hills
Romulus
Southfield
Superior Twp.
Troy
Van Buren Twp.
Walled Lake
Washtenaw County
Wayne
Wayne County
Wayne County Airport
Authority
West Bloomfield Twp.
Westland
Wixom
Ypsilanti Twp.

PRESS RELEASE

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Great Lakes residents hate the muck and odors caused by rotting vegetation on our beaches but they often don't realize that they are a big part of the problem.

The Great Lakes will continue to degrade and beaches will continue to close if there isn't better control of nutrients – whether through regulation or voluntary programs, a local watershed official told a Congressional Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment in Port Huron on Monday, May 12, 2008.

“The nutrients that enter our lakes arrive via our rivers, but many of those nutrients began on the store shelves,” said James W. Ridgway, Executive Director of the Alliance of Rouge Communities, a quasi-governmental organization which represents 40 communities and three counties with storm water management responsibilities in the Rouge River watershed.

Nutrients continue to enter waterways through consumer use of household detergents and fertilizer, he said. The Great Lakes cannot be protected without the support of the all levels of government and all of the citizens that reside in the land that drains to local lakes.

“Legislation that limits phosphorus content in detergents must be revisited to include products that were overlooked or did not exist when we implemented the phosphorus ban in the late 1970s,” he said. “Products with exceedingly high phosphorus content may remove the spots on your glasses, but for many, the price is too high.”

“In 1972 the country looked to Congress to clean up our waters and they delivered,” Ridgway said. “The Clean Water Act was an unmitigated success but there is more that must be done. The municipalities have invested a great deal in terms of time and money in the past ten years. Now they look to both the federal government and the citizens to help them restore and protect our water resources.”

He said local governments should be allowed to enact laws that regulate the application of fertilizers. Consumer use of phosphorus-laden household detergent and lawn fertilizer will continue to degrade the Great Lakes unless stricter controls are enacted, he said.

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“Appropriate fertilizer use makes green lawns – Excess fertilizer makes green lakes”
Ridgway said.

Ridgway, an engineer who has been instrumental in garnering increased focus on southeast Michigan’s waterways such as the Rouge River and Lake St. Clair, was invited to speak before the House subcommittee by U.S. Rep Candice Miller. The hearing was focused on the impacts of nutrients on water quality in the Great Lakes and chaired by U.S. Rep. James L. Oberstar, who helped write the original Clean Water Act.

“Excess nutrients kill lakes,” Ridgway said. “As it stands, nutrients are insufficiently monitored, under-regulated and continuing to impair our Great Lakes.”

Ridgway also recommended that federal funds for Great Lakes water quality monitoring must be increased, federal oversight of the Great Lakes be streamlined and a federal construction loan program be reinstated.