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## N.J. lawmakers pass bill giving state most restrictive standards on fertilizers

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The Record  
STAFF WRITER

New Jersey will now have the most restrictive standards on fertilizer in the nation, after the state legislature passed a bill Monday designed to reduce the amount of nitrogen that can wash into the state's bays, lakes and rivers.

The bill, which Governor Christie has already pledged to sign, not only restricts the nitrogen content of fertilizers, but also sets limits on when homeowners and contractors can spread fertilizer on lawns. Golf courses are exempt from the new rules.

The legislation took more than a year of negotiation among politicians, environmentalists and lawn care manufacturers. The bill targets nitrogen, because it often gets washed by rains into the state's bays and other water bodies,



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aquatic plants that can grow so quickly they reduce oxygen levels in the water, threatening fish and other wildlife. The heavy blooms also cut off sunlight to the sea grasses that provide protective habitat to marine animals and prevent marsh erosion.

Monday's approval by the legislature, with only nominal resistance in either house, drew immediate praise from environmentalists. "This is the strongest and most comprehensive fertilizer bill in the nation," said Jeff Tittel of the Sierra Club's New Jersey chapter. "This bill goes a long way in helping to protect our vital waterways, including Barnegat Bay. This is a great victory for clean water."

He noted that too much fertilizer and other nutrients washing into the bays and lakes make it impossible for people to swim because of the growth of invasive aquatic plants. Towns and lake oversight commissions in recent years have had to spend tens of thousands of dollars to remove invasive milfoil, a plant whose long

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To reduce the risk of fertilizer runoff into waterways, homeowners will be banned from applying fertilizer between Nov. 15 and March 1 and whenever the ground is frozen. In a similar vein, fertilizer can't be used within 10 feet of any water body or just before a heavy rainfall.

Professionals will be barred from applying fertilizer between Dec. 1 and March 1.

Fertilizer manufacturers must include 20 percent slow-release nitrogen in their products under the bill; an earlier version has required a more stringent 30 percent, but was eased during negotiations.

Retailers will still be able to sell fertilizer with the old nitrogen standards for up to two years from the bill's signing.

The fertilizer bill is part of a larger package of legislation designed to protect Barnegat Bay, which has one of the highest levels of nutrients in the nation.

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A large, colorful advertisement for All American Ford. On the left, a cartoon superhero character in a blue suit with the number '1' is shown. The text 'PRE-SEASON SAVINGS' and 'IT'S GO TIME!' is prominently displayed. A large yellow '\$500 OFF MSRP' is the central focus. Below this, it says 'TOWARDS THE PURCHASE OF ANY NEW FORD • LINCOLN • MERCURY • SUBARU VEHICLE'. The 'All American' logo and Ford logo are also present. At the bottom, the website 'www.ALL.AMERICAN.FORD.NET' is listed, along with logos for Ford, Lincoln, Mercury, and Subaru. A note at the bottom right states 'MUST BE PRESENT AT TIME OF PURCHASE'.

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