



# NEWS RELEASE

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Office of the Secretary

50 Harry S. Truman Parkway

Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**CONTACT:** Julie Oberg  
410-841-5888  
Vanessa Orlando  
410-841-5889

## **MDA PROPOSES NEW LAWN FERTILIZER REGULATIONS AND CHANGES TO FERTILIZER APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS**

*30-Day Public Comment Period Open through February 25*

**ANNAPOLIS, MD (January 25, 2013)** – The Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) has announced that new regulations for lawn fertilizer applications along with proposed changes to Maryland’s non-agricultural commercial fertilizer application requirements were published in today’s *Maryland Register*. MDA will offer a 30-day public comment period ending February 25.

“Lawn fertilizer accounts for approximately 44 percent of the fertilizer sold in Maryland,” said Maryland Agriculture Secretary Earl F. Hance. “While Maryland farmers are required to follow nutrient management plans when fertilizing their fields, additional stakeholder involvement by both lawn care professionals and homeowners is needed if Maryland is to meet new nutrient reduction goals outlined in its Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP) to restore the Bay,” he added.

The new regulations were developed to implement the requirements of the *Fertilizer Use Act of 2011*, Maryland’s new lawn fertilizer law. The law is designed to protect the Chesapeake Bay from excess nutrients entering its waters from a variety of urban sources, including golf courses, parks, recreation areas, athletic fields, businesses and hundreds of thousands of suburban and urban lawns.

Once approved, the proposed changes will be included in MDA’s Urban Nutrient Management Manual. They will take effect October 1, 2013. Following are key features of the new regulations:

- Establishes a training, certification and licensing program for lawn care professionals
- Requires lawn care professionals to obtain soil tests for each new customer and once every three years thereafter
- Establishes maximum application rates for nitrogen, water soluble nitrogen and enhanced efficiency controlled release fertilizer
- Establishes application guidelines for natural organic or organic products containing phosphorus
- Requires both homeowners and professionals to use best management practices when applying fertilizer, observe fertilizer blackout dates and follow University of Maryland recommendations when fertilizing lawns
- Prohibits lawn care professionals and homeowners from applying lawn fertilizer to impervious surfaces or frozen ground and establishes setbacks next to waterways

The proposed changes as submitted to the Maryland Register are available on MDA’s website at: [http://www.mda.maryland.gov/news\\_room/proposed\\_regulations.php](http://www.mda.maryland.gov/news_room/proposed_regulations.php). Comments may be sent to Jo A. Mercer, Ed.D., Administrator, Nutrient Management Program, Maryland Department of Agriculture, 50 Harry S. Truman Parkway, Annapolis, MD 21401. Dr. Mercer may also be contacted at 410-841-5959, or [Jo.Mercer@maryland.gov](mailto:Jo.Mercer@maryland.gov). Faxes may be sent to her attention at 410-841-5950. Comments will be accepted through February 25, 2013. A public hearing has not been scheduled.

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