

February 16, 2010

Pigeon Lake Watershed Association  
13211-146 Street  
Edmonton, Alberta  
T5L 4S8

Summer Villages  
Pigeon Lake, Alberta

Attn: Mayors and Councilors

**Re: Use of Fertilizers**

The evidence is compelling that our lake is suffering under increasing stress in recent years. Significant development, deforestation, riparian area misuse, septic fields and the increasing nutrient load into the lake are all contributing to the decline in the water quality of Pigeon Lake. We are all aware of the recurring algae blooms which are directly attributed to the nutrient load. The **Board of Directors of the** Pigeon Lake Watershed Association, through its stated objective of enhancing, preserving and protecting Pigeon Lake and its watershed, is strongly recommending that the Summer Villages take immediate actions to help reduce the nutrient load into the lake.

The Association has adopted a policy that residential fertilizers should not be used around the lake. At the present time, the lake is in a critical state. Water levels are dropping at an alarming rate and because of the extremely long retention, nutrients are not being flushed from the lake. Blue green algae blooms are becoming routine. Efforts must be increased to prevent this situation from becoming worse. It is recognized that residential fertilizers may not be the main contributor to the nutrient load but it is important to address all sources that can be controlled.

The Summer Villages are undertaking a mammoth project with the Regional Wastewater project about to start. This will help significantly but other effort must be taken to protect our lake. An easy and immediate way is the elimination of fertilizers on residential lots. Not only will this reduce the amount of nutrient entering the lake but it will increase awareness for all lake residents and seasonal users that our actions are affecting the lake and everyone has a part to play in protecting it. It would certainly be triumphant message if we could portray a unified approach in taking this simple action to protect our lake!

The PLWA has had numerous comments from our membership about observing manicured lawns in their own communities and that most neighbours cooperate readily when they are asked to stop fertilizing. However, there are some users stuck in bad old habits that are not convinced, as they argue that it would not be allowed if it was hurting the lake. Appropriate bylaws allow people to understand what actions are not appropriate.

The Pigeon Lake Watershed Association encourages all Summer Villages to pass bylaws which will prohibit the use of fertilizers. Acceptable practices would only include their use in container gardening. The use of “eco-friendly” or imported natural (manure) fertilizers should not be allowed as they will ultimately add to the nutrient load in the lake. There is no doubt that there will be the few that object to such a ban but our collective actions in the past have demonstrated that we must act with a sense of urgency in order to protect our lake. We cannot expect others to reduce their impact on the lake if we have not made sacrifices ourselves.

This action is following the precautionary principle. A review of the ban should take place after the lake level recovers to normal levels or when satisfactory justification for increased use of fertilizers is accepted. At present, there are two Summer Villages which have passed fertilizer bans and the Association commends them for taking this responsible action. It is hoped that other villages will follow their lead.

The Association also encourages natural vegetation, trees and plants and a healthy riparian area rather than a large grassed area which is dependent on fertilizers.

The PLWA has engaged scientists and other professionals to examine what is happening to the lake and prepare reports that we can share with our membership of over 1000 members. We would love to be able to send an information flash out to each member to tell them about the positive action being taken by the Summer Villages to help protect and preserve Pigeon Lake.

If further information is required, please do not hesitate to contact the Association or check out our web site at [www.pigeonlakewatershedassociation.com](http://www.pigeonlakewatershedassociation.com). We look forward to any assistance you can provide and support you in this important lake stewardship act.

Yours truly,

Trudy Flesher

President  
Pigeon Lake Watershed Association