



What do clean dishes have to do with excessive weed growth in the Lake?



Dirty soapy water from your dishwasher flows into your septic system, and can overflow into Big Island Pond, bringing with it lots of phosphorus. Phosphorus is a nutrient and causes excessive aquatic plant growth, maybe in your beach area.

Phosphorus was once a common ingredient used in many cleansers, but did you know that it is illegal to sell soaps containing phosphorus in New Hampshire? The exception to this law is for soaps used in automatic dishwasher detergent.

Phosphorus has been banned because it is a "limiting nutrient" associated with aquatic plant and algal growth. Phosphorus-loading in freshwater systems like lakes, ponds, and rivers leads to increased plant and algal growth, oxygen depletion and ultimately accelerated lake aging. If you are caught using soap containing phosphorus in New Hampshire, other than automatic dishwasher detergent, you may be fined.

Most common brands of dishwasher detergent contain phosphorus, with the amount varying considerably by brand and by type, with the lesser amounts in gels and liquids, and greater amounts in powders and tablets/pacs. The chart shows percentage of phosphate by brand and type.

As a rule of thumb it is always a good idea to check the label and make sure phosphorus is not a listed ingredient.

Automatic Dishwasher Detergent	% Phosphorus
Gel/Liquid	
Citrus Magic	0
Palmolive Gel	1.6
Electrasol Gel	3.7
Hannaford Gel	4.0
Market Basket Gel	4.0
Sunlight Gel	4.3
Cascade Liquid	4.5
Cascade Gel	4.5
Cascade Complete	5.0
Powder	
Electrasol	4.5
Sunlight 2 in 1	4.5
Hannaford	5.3
Market Basket	5.3
Cascade	6.4
Cascade Complete	6.9
Tablets/Pacs	
Sun & Earth Concentrated Pacs	0
Market Basket Tabs	8.0
Cascade 2-1 Pacs	8.0
Sunlight 3 in 1 Pacs	8.6
Electrasol Tabs	8.7
Electrasol 3 in 1 Tabs	8.7
Electrasol Gel Pacs	8.7
Dishwashing Liquid	
No phosphates allowed in N.H.	0
Laundry Detergent	
No phosphates allowed in N.H.	0

This shelf survey was conducted at Hannaford and Market Basket. Information is from the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services website <http://www.des.state.nh.us/bb.htm>.