



“Phosphates in the stream”

You are camping and you have run out of clean clothes for the trip. You decide to wash a tee shirt in the stream that runs through your camp. You only have dish soap with you (which has phosphates in it). You walk down to the side of the stream and begin to wash your shirt in the water. Soap bubbles float downstream in the current. What are the negative effects of high amounts of sediment in a stream?

- Is there anything wrong with the decision to wash your clothing in the stream with dish detergent?

Yes. Excess phosphates in freshwater environments can cause an increase in plant and algae growth, which can cause eutrophication.

- What effects do phosphates have on the water quality?

The result of eutrophication may include a decrease in the level of dissolved oxygen in the water, which is necessary for aquatic species, such as fish and macroinvertebrates to survive.

- What are sources of phosphates?

Phosphates are naturally found in the environment in small amounts. However, humans can add phosphates by using fertilizers and detergents.

- What law would you be violating by washing your shirt in the stream with soap?

*The Phosphate Ban Act
The PA Clean Streams Law*