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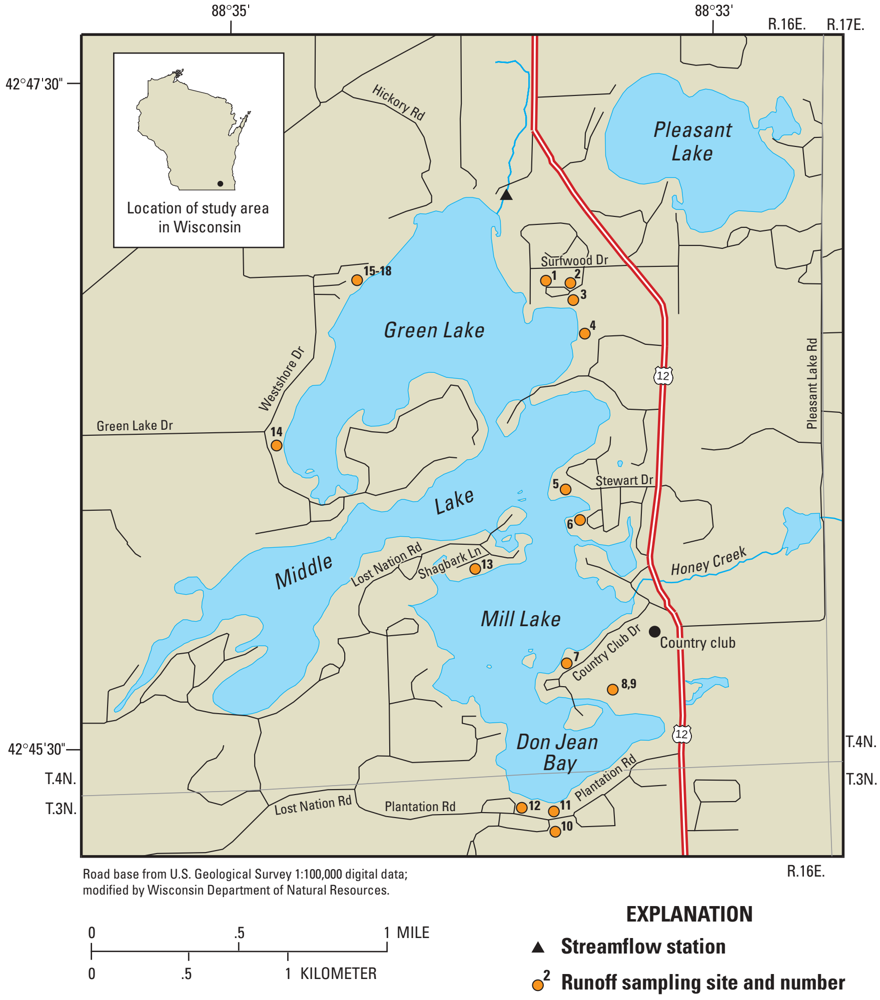
Effects of Lawn Fertilizer on Nutrient Concentration in Runoff from Lakeshore Lawns, Lauderdale Lakes, Wisconsin

Introduction

Transport of nutrients (primarily forms of nitrogen and phosphorus) to lakes and resulting accelerated eutrophication are serious concerns for planners and managers of lakes in urban and developing suburban areas of the country. Runoff from urban land surfaces such as streets, lawns, and rooftops has been noted to contain high concentrations of nutrients; lawns and streets were the largest sources of phosphorus in residential areas (Waschbusch, Selbig and Bannerman, 1999). The cumulative contribution from many lawns to the amount of nutrients in lakes is not well understood and potentially could be a large part of the total nutrient contribution.

Why study runoff from lawns?

The shorelines of many lakes are already highly developed, and the potential water-quality effects of this development are increasing. Many lawn-care professionals and homeowners hold a common belief that runoff from lawn surfaces is minimal and that phosphorus movement from lawns is not a problem (Barth, 1995). The homeowners' goal to maintain lush green lawns may conflict with the lake manager's goal to minimize nutrient inputs. In cooperation with the Lauderdale Lakes Lake Management District and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) conducted a study during 1999–2000 to determine the magnitude of nutrient runoff from nearshore residential lawns surrounding a lake and to determine whether fertilizer application and the type of fertilizer (regular or nonphosphorus types) affect the amount of nutrients in runoff from lawns. Such information is important for developing stormwater best-management practices and for developing or improving shoreland zoning ordinances and other local regulations to protect or improve the water quality of lakes (Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Wisconsin Shoreland Management Program, http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/water/wm/dsfm/shore/title.htm, accessed February 8, 2002).



Road base from U.S. Geological Survey 1:100,000 digital data; modified by Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

Figure 1. Site locations surrounding Lauderdale Lakes, Wis.

Figure 2. Lakeshore development and lawns at Lauderdale Lakes, Wis.

The study area was located at Lauderdale Lakes in Walworth County, a chain of lakes in the more populated southeastern part of Wisconsin (fig. 1). The 15-mile shoreline of the lakes is about 70 percent developed, primarily as single-family housing, and is the focus for additional residential development. Most of the lakefront homes have sloping lawns that are maintained to the water's edge (fig. 2). Information about the specific sources and amounts of phosphorus entering the lakes was needed to develop a plan for reducing the input of phosphorus. The lakes are phosphorus limited, meaning that phosphorus is the nutrient limiting plant growth and affecting lake productivity. A previous study (Garn and others, 1996) found that surface-water inflow from the small nearshore contributing drainage area accounted for only 4 percent of the water inflow to the lake but represented 51 percent of the total annual phosphorus input from all sources. The Lake Management District is in the process of installing

Figure 3. Tube-type lawn sampler (site 2).

and implementing various measures to reduce the phosphorus input to the lakes, among which is a “lake-friendly” fertilizer program that encourages residents to apply nonphosphorus turf fertilizer. The Lake Management District has been supplying residents with phosphorus-free fertilizer for purchase for about 3 years, and data were needed to evaluate the effectiveness of the program.

Equipment and Methods

In 1999 and spring 2000, lawn samplers designed to collect surface runoff were installed using methods described in Waschbusch, Selbig, and Bannerman (1999, p. 7). The samplers collect runoff through two 5-foot pieces of 1/2-inch-diameter PVC tubing placed flush with the surface of the ground, on a sloping lawn, with an angle of about 150 degrees between the two tubes (fig. 3). Runoff entered the tubing through a 1/8-inch slot cut at intervals along the length of the tube; each tube was then wrapped with fiberglass screen to prevent insects and large debris from entering. The tube was held in place on the lawn surface with wire staples. At the end of each tube, a connecting piece of 1/2-inch silicone tubing directed the collected runoff into a covered 1-quart glass jar placed in the ground in a 4-inch-diameter protective PVC sleeve with a cover.

During the summer of 2000, the original sampler design was modified to increase sample volumes at sites that did not generate sufficient runoff samples and to minimize contamination problems caused by insects and earthworms entering the samples despite the fiberglass screen. One variation to increase runoff-collection efficiency was to enlarge the slots cut in the pipes to 1/4-inch. Another technique used at sites with the least runoff production was to replace the tubing with two lengths of 4-foot-long plastic lawn edging that directed runoff toward the collecting jar (fig. 4); this solution was more effective at increasing captured runoff and minimizing contamination than increasing the slot size.

Clean sample bottles were placed in the lawn samplers before each expected storm or at about 2-week intervals when sites were inspected if there was no rain. Samplers were cleaned and rinsed with deionized water during each visit to remove any accumulated dirt or debris. Notes were kept on volume of runoff in the collection bottle; color and noticeable sediment, debris, or insects in the bottle; and site condition. Sample bottles were collected as soon as possible after each storm (usually within 1 to 5 days) and brought to Madison, where the contents were filtered with a 0.45-micrometer filter, preserved with sulfuric acid, and then delivered to the Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene for nutrient analyses. Samples were analyzed according to standard laboratory methods (Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene, written commun., 2001) for concentrations of total phosphorus (TP), total dissolved phosphorus, total Kjeldahl nitrogen (TKN), dissolved ammonia nitrogen, and dissolved nitrate plus nitrite nitrogen. When insufficient sample volume was collected from a storm to analyze for all nutrients, analyses were done first for total phosphorus.

Figure 4. Edging-type lawn sampler (site 5).

Description of Sampling Sites

The Lauderdale Lakes are a chain of three interconnected lakes with a surface area of 807 acres. The lakes are ground-water drainage lakes in which more than 90 percent of the water inflows are from ground water and direct precipitation. Some surface water enters the lakes by way of a few ephemeral drainageways or as overland flow from the nearshore area. Lake and drainage-basin characteristics are described in detail by Garn and others (1996). Lakeshore developments include about 1,010 single-family homes, of which about 30 percent are year-round residences. Other developments include a golf course, a boat marina, and two recreational camps.

In the lakeshore area within 300 feet of the shoreline, soils consist primarily of the Casco-Rodman Complex (60 percent of the area), Rodman-Casco Complex (12 percent of the area), and Casco-Fox Silt Loam (6 percent of the area). The Casco-Rodman Complex is found on 20–30 percent slopes; surface textures range from loam to silt loam, and subsoils are clay loam to sandy loam. The Rodman-Casco Complex is found on slopes of 30 to 45 percent formed in loamy deposits over sand and gravel. The Casco-Fox soils are found on slopes of 6 to 12 percent and have a silt loam texture (Haszel, 1971). Soil disturbance can be severe during building construction in suburban areas, commonly resulting in subsoil compaction by heavy equipment followed by layering with topsoil. Such disturbance has the potential for greatly increasing runoff and nutrient losses.

Samplers were installed at 18 locations along the lakeshore (fig.1), representing different types of lawn-fertilizer use, undeveloped areas, and one area of mixed land use (part agricultural, ditched paved roads, and lawns). Sites were grouped into three categories: regular-fertilizer sites, nonphosphorus-fertilizer sites, and unfertilized sites. Samplers were installed at 12 sites and operated during the growing season in 1999. In 2000, six additional sites were installed, including two samplers in a swale. Samplers were installed at seven lawn sites where traditional fertilizer was applied, three sites where nonphosphorus fertilizer was applied, and six control sites where no fertilizer was applied (three steep, wooded sites; two lawns; and an undeveloped grass field). Much of the area is wooded, and many of the lawns have an overhead canopy of hardwood trees. Two samplers were installed in a swale area on the south side of Mill Lake (Don Jean Bay) that collected mixed runoff from an agricultural field, lawns, and streets. The drainage area of the upgradient sampler was 8 acres and of the downgradient sampler was 38 acres, of which about 25 percent was cropland.

Property owners were asked to participate in the runoff study. It was assumed that most lawn fertilizer users followed usual manufacturer recommendations of four applications per season made in about April–May, June–July, August–September, and October at 3 to 3.5 pounds per 1,000 square feet. Homeowners applying regular fertilizer fertilized their lawns two or more times per year. Each participant’s property was inspected to ensure that lawn slope was at least 20 feet long, grade was at

Table 1. Physical characteristics of sampling sites at Lauderdale Lakes, Wis. [P, phosphorus; ppm, parts per million; %, percent, turf-quality values are defined in text; ft^2, square feet; --, no data]

Site ID	Station number	Site type	Soil type/texture[a]	Soil P concentration[b] (ppm)	Slope (%)	Vegetative cover density (%)	Turf quality	Runoff area (ft^2)	Number of samples	Percentage of storm events
Regular fertilizer application sites										
2	424652088333901	Wooded lawn	Hebron loam, gravelly	68	21	65	6	150	10	67
3	424650088333501	Lawn	Hebron loam	32	9	90	8.5	180	8	80
5	424616088334201	Wooded lawn	Casco-Rodman loam-silt loam	66	20	100	9	114	8	33
8	424541088334602	Golf course lawn	Casco-Rodman loam-silt loam	35	20	100	9.5	250	15	63
9	424541088334601	Golf course lawn	Casco-Rodman loam-silt loam	78	24	100	9.5	186	9	54
10	424514088334001	Swale	Casco-Fox silt loam	--	5	--	--	8 acres	9	69
11	424518088334301	Swale	Casco-Fox silt loam	--	4	--	--	38 acres	10	77
12	424519088334101	Lawn	Casco-Fox silt loam	28	16	100	10	104	1	8
15	424654088343103	Lawn	Fox silt loam	11	11	60	6	152	5	24
Nonphosphorus-fertilizer application sites										
6	424611088334001	Wooded lawn	Casco-Rodman loam-silt loam	20	14	80	7.5	250	18	67
13	424603088340201	Wooded lawn	Casco-Rodman loam-silt loam	21	34	60	5	140	15	54
14	424623088345101	Wooded lawn	Casco-Rodman loam-silt loam	70	14	85	8	225	8	30
Unfertilized sites										
1	424652088334401	Grass field	Fox sandy loam	65	9	100	7	128	2	13
4	424643088333601	Wooded lawn	Casco-Rodman loam-silt loam	38	12	85	8	188	6	47
7	424543088334001	Wooded lawn	Casco-Rodman loam-silt loam	14	22	70	6	209	12	46
16	424654088343101	Wooded	Rodman-Casco loam/sand,gravel	28	41	95	1	200	9	33
17	424654088343102	Wooded	Rodman-Casco loam/sand,gravel	24	33	95	1	300	13	48
18	424654088343104	Wooded	Rodman-Casco sandy, gravelly	16	30	65	2	140	7	28

[a] From Haszel, 1971.

[b] 50–75 ppm P optimum recommendation for turfgrass. Analysis by Soil and Plant Laboratory, University of Wisconsin, Madison.

least 5 percent, and sample catchment area was not affected by runoff from rain gutters, driveways, or other lawns or sources. A soil sample collected at the time of sampler installation was analyzed for soil texture, pH, and phosphorus content by the University of Wisconsin Soil and Plant Analysis Laboratory. A visual vegetative soil-cover density, in percent, and a turf-quality rating were assigned to each lawn during visits. Turf quality was based on a 1 to 10 scale: for example, a score of 10 represented 100 percent best-quality green grass cover, 5 represented 50 percent grass cover with bare spots, weeds, and dead grass providing additional cover, and 1 indicated no turfgrass cover, with dead grass, weeds, and other vegetation providing primary soil cover. The more heavily fertilized sites (5, 8, 9, 12) had the best turf-quality ratings. Various physical characteristics of the sampling sites are summarized in table 1.

Nutrient Concentration in Runoff

Rainfall and Runoff

Long-term precipitation records from the National Weather Service stations at Whitewater (about 9 miles northwest of Lauderdale Lakes) and Lake Geneva (about 13 miles southeast) were used to estimate rainfall at Lauderdale Lakes (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, 1999–2000). Data from a recording rain gage at a USGS streamflow-gaging station at Jackson Creek near Elkhorn (9 miles south) was used after the rain gage was installed on May 25, 1999. Rainfall was above the 1961-90 average for April, May, and June 1999 and near or below average the remainder of the season. In 2000, rainfall amounts for May, June, and September were substantially above average (fig. 5). Ten runoff events occurred from 12 storms in the 1999 sampling season and 13 runoff events occurred from 15 storms in 2000; generally, the storms in 2000 were larger than those in 1999. A storm event was defined as more than 0.3 inches of rain, and a runoff event as one that resulted in at least two runoff samples with sufficient volume for analysis (about 100 ml). A summary of the storm dates and precipitation amounts is given in table 2.

Although measurement of quantity of runoff was not part of this study, a qualitative evaluation of runoff may be obtained by comparing the

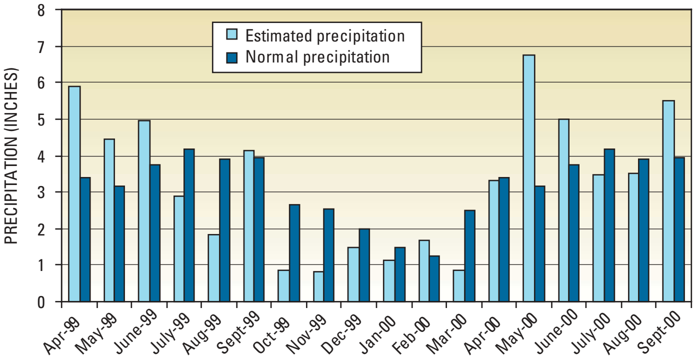


Figure 5. Estimated monthly precipitation at Lauderdale Lakes, Wis., during 1999–2000 compared to normal monthly precipitation.

Table 2. Storm information and number of sites with runoff samples at Lauderdale Lakes, Wis., 1999–2000 [est, estimated]

Storm number	Storm start date	Total precip amount (inches)	Number of sites with runoff samples
99S1	4/9/1999	0.86 [a]	4
99S2	4/22/1999	3.73 [a]	9
99S3	5/12/1999	0.63 [a]	3
99S4	5/16/1999	0.80 [a] est	4
99S5	5/17/1999	0.66 [a] est	3
99S6	6/1/1999	0.70	8
99S7	6/10/1999	3.35	6
99S8	7/17/1999	1.11	4
99S9	8/13/1999	0.37	5
99S10	9/27/1999	3.66	11
00S1	2/21/2000	2.0 [b]	11
00S2	4/19/2000	2.59	2
00S3	5/9/2000	1.36	9
00S4	5/18/2000	1.95	5
00S5	5/27/2000	3.85	14
00S6	6/11/2000	1.95	9
00S7	7/2/2000	1.40	12
00S8	7/10/2000	1.33	5
00S9	7/31/2000	1.62	3
00S10	8/5/2000	1.17	16
00S11	8/17/2000	0.70	5
00S12	9/11/2000	1.94	17
00S13	9/22/2000	1.89	9

[a] Measured at Whitewater.

[b] From 6 inches snowmelt and light rain.

Figure 6. Site 12 at Lauderdale Lakes, Wis.—an example of high-quality turfgrass.

number of sites where runoff was sampled for each storm (table 2) and the number of storms sampled at each site (table 1). The magnitude of runoff is dependent on a combination of factors including rainfall amount and intensity, soil-surface storage and detention, and infiltration rate. Infiltration is affected by soil type, vegetative cover, slope, and other factors (Haan, Barfield, and Hayes, 1994, p. 52–54). In general, sites with dense vegetative cover and coarse soils with high infiltration rates produced less runoff. Specifically, site 12 of the fertilized sites (fig. 6), which had the best-quality turf and fertilizer applications of 4 times per year, produced the least runoff (only 8 percent of all storms). Other sites (5, 8, 9) with high turf quality and density produced more frequent runoff samples, possibly because of steeper slopes or other factors. At six of the lawn sites, more than 50 percent of the storm events produced runoff.

The phenomenon of soil-water repellency, or hydrophobicity, was observed at many of the lawn sites, especially after dry periods. Water repellency of soils reduces affinity to water so that the soil resists wetting, thus reducing infiltration capacity, decreasing plant growth, and increasing surface runoff. The phenomenon has been widely accepted as a problem for many soils in seasonally dry climates. Soils with grass cover in temperate climates have recently been found to develop resistance to wetting—a common problem known as “localized dry spot” on golf courses (Doerr, Shakesby and Walsh, 2000; Kostka, 2000). Therefore, water repellency could be an additional factor influencing runoff from residential lawn soils (L.F. DeBano, University of Arizona, oral commun., 2001). At Lauderdale Lakes, there was also some indication that lawn shading by trees and less frequent use of fertilizer (sites 6, 7, and 13) resulted in less dense and patchy turf cover, increasing runoff. In ongoing turf studies at the University of Wisconsin (W.R. Kussow, Department of Soil Science, written commun., 2000), researchers found that not fertilizing turfgrass caused thinning of the turf, increased the amount of runoff, and increased nitrogen and phosphorus loss. Generally, the percentage of storms resulting in surface runoff from many of the lawns was higher than expected. Runoff from lawns may occur more frequently than previously thought because of the complex interaction of many factors.

Nutrient Concentrations in Runoff and Effects of Fertilizer Use

Summary statistics of nutrient concentrations measured in runoff from different site categories are given in table 3 and compared in figure 7. Detailed data for each of the sites were published annually in the U.S. Geological Survey Water-Data Reports (Holmstrom and others, 2000; Garn and others, 2001). There was a wide range in concentration of most nutrients among storms during the study period. Given this variability, geometric means or medians are more meaningful for comparison because they are better estimates of central tendency than arithmetic means. The nonparametric Kruskal-Wallis test was used to test for overall differences in concentration distributions, and the Wilcoxon rank sum test was used to test for differences in medians between pairs of lawn categories (P.W. Rasmussen, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, written commun., 2001). A confidence level of 10 percent ($p = 0.10$) was chosen to evaluate the results of the statistical tests. The difference in medians for samples from two different lawn categories was considered statistically significant if p values were less than 0.10.

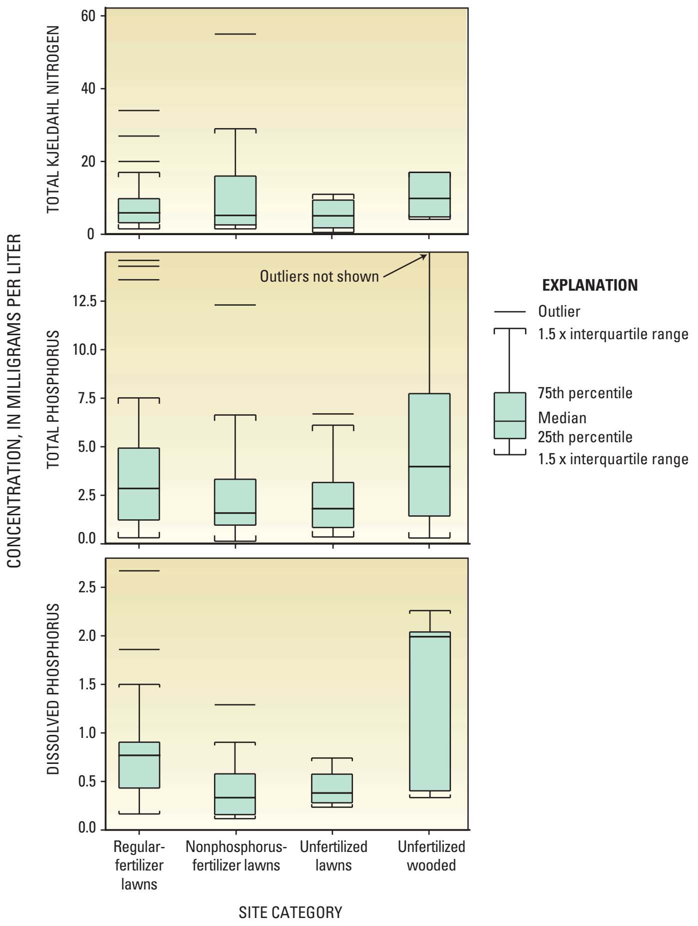


Figure 7. Nutrient concentrations in runoff from different categories of sampling sites at Lauderdale Lakes, Wis.

A quality-control study was done to determine nutrient-concentration effects of grass clippings, earthworms, and insects that managed to get into water samples. All of these contamination sources had a large effect by increasing nitrogen and phosphorus concentrations. Samples that were affected by these contamination sources, identified from field notes, were excluded from data analysis, but the exclusions did not significantly change the overall results.

No significant differences in concentration among lawn categories were found for any of the nitrogen species. Fertilizer use did not affect total nitrogen concentrations in runoff. In addition, nitrite plus nitrate concentrations in runoff were generally low.

Dissolved phosphorus concentrations were significantly different ($p = 0.02$) among the lawn categories. Moreover, the median concentration of dissolved phosphorus from regular-fertilizer sites (0.77 milligram per liter (mg/L)) was significantly greater than that from nonphosphorus-fertilizer sites (0.33 mg/L) and unfertilized lawn sites (0.38 mg/L). Total phosphorus in runoff from regular-fertilizer sites compared to nonphosphorus-fertilizer and to unfertilized-lawn sites had p-values of 0.11 and 0.14, respectively. Thus, median total phosphorus concentrations were not significantly different at $p < 0.1$. Dissolved phosphorus was a fraction of total phosphorus, and its concentrations ranged from 22 to 45 percent of total phosphorus for all lawn categories.

Figure 8. Dense understory vegetation on wooded slope of sites 16 and 17 at Lauderdale Lakes, Wis.

The median dissolved phosphorus concentration in lawn runoff from regular-fertilizer sites was twice that for unfertilized and nonphosphorus-fertilizer sites. Runoff from lawn sites with nonphosphorus-fertilizer applications had a median dissolved phosphorus and total phosphorus concentration that was similar to unfertilized sites. Dissolved phosphorus in runoff is important because it is readily available for plant growth. Although not significant at $p < 0.1$, lawn sites with regular fertilizer applications had a median total phosphorus concentration in runoff that was 1.6 times that for unfertilized sites and 1.8 times that for nonphosphorus-fertilizer sites.

In comparison with other studies, phosphorus concentrations in lawn runoff at Lauderdale Lakes were slightly higher than concentrations found in runoff from urban lawns in Madison, Wis. (Waschbusch, Selbig and Bannerman, 1999), but were similar to those in lawn runoff from suburban lawns in Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minn. (Barten and Jahnke, 1997). Surprisingly, nutrient concentrations in runoff from the unfertilized, steep, wooded hillsides (sites 16, 17, and 18) were higher than those from the lawn sites and thus were separated from the unfertilized lawn sites in the data comparisons. These wooded sites (fig. 8) may be different from other wooded sites because of their steep slopes, thick surface organic and litter layer, and dense understory vegetation (crown vetch) planted for erosion control. Waschbusch, Selbig, and Bannerman (1999) found a direct relation between phosphorus concentration and percentage of overhead tree canopy that could affect source-area concentrations. In the Lauderdale Lakes study, however, all lawn categories contained sites with overhead tree canopy, and the lawn sites treated with regular fertilizer had the fewest trees; therefore, differences between regular-fertilizer sites and the other lawn sites could be even greater if there was an effect from tree cover.

Total phosphorus concentration in lawn runoff had a significant ($p = 0.08$) relation to soil-phosphorus concentration (table 1); total dissolved phosphorus had no significant relation. The low category of soil-phosphorus concentration (0 to 24 parts per million (ppm)) had a significantly lower median concentration of total phosphorus in lawn runoff (about half) than the medians from medium (25-65 ppm) or high (66 ppm or more) soil-phosphorus concentration lawns. There was no significant difference between runoff concentrations from medium and high soil-phosphorus concentration lawns. Barten and Jahnke (1997) also found a significant difference in concentration of phosphorus in runoff from different categories of lawn soil fertility. In their study, total and soluble reactive phosphorus concentrations in runoff from high soil-phosphorus concentration lawns were twice as large as the concentrations in runoff from low soil-phosphorus concentration lawns.

Median nutrient concentrations from the Don Jean Bay swale area with mixed land use were more similar to those from the unfertilized wooded sites and fertilized lawn sites than to those from other lawn sites (table 3). The range in concentrations for ammonia nitrogen and total Kjeldahl nitrogen in runoff from the swale, however, was greater than those for the other sites.

Although it was not within the scope of this study to measure runoff volumes from each of the sites and quantify the mass of nutrients transported offsite, the concentration data will be useful for future computations of unit-area loads (that is, mass of a particular nutrient species per unit contributing area). Concentrations of nutrients from lawns observed in this

Table 3. Statistical summary of nutrient concentrations in runoff from different site categories, Lauderdale Lakes, Wis. [n, number of samples; TKN, total Kjeldahl nitrogen; NO_2, nitrite nitrogen; NO_3, nitrate nitrogen; TP, total phosphorus; Diss P, dissolved phosphorus; all concentrations in milligrams per liter]

Regular-fertilizer lawn sites					
	Ammonia N	TKN	$NO_2 + NO_3$	TP	Diss P
Geometric mean	1.11	5.9	0.09	2.57	0.7
Median	1.07	5.9	0.12	2.85	0.77
Mean	2.18	8.6	0.17	4.02	0.93
Max	14.5	34	0.56	23.2	3.32
Min	0.05	1.5	0.01	0.31	0.17
n	23	23	23	58	23
Nonphosphorus-fertilizer lawn sites					
	Ammonia N	TKN	$NO_2 + NO_3$	TP	Diss P
Geometric mean	1	6.5	0.14	1.89	0.34
Median	0.93	5.2	0.14	1.58	0.33
Mean	3.95	12.2	0.57	3.3	0.45
Max	36.2	55	5.22	23.5	1.29
Min	0.04	1.5	0.14	0.14	0.12
n	14	14	14	38	15
Unfertilized lawn sites					
	Ammonia N	TKN	$NO_2 + NO_3$	TP	Diss P
Geometric mean	0.76	4.08	0.12	1.73	0.4
Median	0.63	5.1	0.14	1.81	0.38
Mean	1.12	5.85	0.17	2.33	0.43
Max	2.98	11	0.4	6.69	0.74
Min	0.22	0.53	0.01	0.36	0.23
n	9	9	9	19	8
Unfertilized wooded sites					
	Ammonia N	TKN	$NO_2 + NO_3$	TP	Diss P
Geometric mean	2.95	12.7	0.16	3.52	1.04
Median	4.38	9.8	0.24	3.98	1.99
Mean	5.33	29.3	0.9	6.78	1.4
Max	11.6	130	2.24	30.6	2.26
Min	0.41	4.1	0.01	0.3	0.33
n	5	6	5	28	5
Don Jean Bay swale sites					
	Ammonia N	TKN	$NO_2 + NO_3$	TP	Diss P
Geometric mean	3.48	14.5	0.06	2.46	0.49
Median	3.96	19	0.04	2.66	0.41
Mean	11.91	31.3	0.15	3.55	0.91
Max	88.1	160	0.6	9.07	3.33
Min	0.56	2	0.01	0.37	0.18
n	11	11	10	19	9

study are much greater (by 3 to 5 times) than the estimated concentrations used to calculate total phosphorus load from surface runoff to Lauderdale Lakes in a previous study by Garn and others (1996, p. 16). All of the nutrient load from lawn runoff may not actually reach or be deposited in the lake because of varying flowpaths, soil permeability, breaks in slope, vegetative buffers, and other obstructions; however, in many cases, lawns extend and slope continuously to the water's edge to provide a direct source of loading.

The annual phosphorus load from the nearshore area of Lauderdale Lakes may be greater than the 430 pounds previously estimated. Using a revised median concentration of 2.3 mg/L for surface runoff from an estimated 220 acres of developed shoreline (67 percent of shoreline) within 200 feet from the edge of water, annual total phosphorus load from residential lawns could be as much as 370 pounds (assuming all of the phosphorus reaches the lake). If a delivery of 50 percent of the load is assumed, and the total surface-water load is recomputed using the surface runoff values from the previous study, the total annual surface-water load from the nearshore drainage area would be 620 pounds, which represents 60 precent of the total annual phosphorus input from all sources. Studies at Lauderdale Lakes and several other ongoing studies by the USGS in Wisconsin will provide additional information on the effects of lawns and shoreline development on nutrient loads to lakes.

Limitations of Results

- Many runoff samples (about 30 percent) overflowed the collecting bottle and may not be truly representative of the mean concentration from each storm. According to T.D. Stuntebeck (U.S. Geological Survey, unpub. data, 2002), overflow samples for suspended solids and total phosphorus had higher concentrations than those from samples that did not overflow the container, but the opposite was true for dissolved phosphorus. Barten and Jahnke (1997) also found that overflow samples had lower concentrations for some constituents. Overflow occurred, however, for all categories of sites, and differences noted could potentially be even greater.
- The number of samples for some categories was relatively small for rigorous statistical analysis, and the small numbers could lead to inconsistencies among comparisons for different pairs of categories.
- Nutrient-concentration data are for onsite runoff and should be used with caution when making offsite interpretations. Not all of the nutrient load from lawn runoff may actually enter the lake.
- Some changes in nutrient species composition affecting dissolved constituents may have occurred in those samples that were not collected within 2 days after a storm.

Conclusions

- A high percentage of storms resulted in surface runoff from many of the lawns. Runoff from lawns may occur relatively frequently, more than 50 percent of the storms for many lawns.
- Fertilizer use did not affect nitrogen concentrations in runoff. Nitrite plus nitrate concentrations in runoff were generally low.
- Total phosphorus concentration in lawn runoff was directly related to the phosphorus concentration of lawn soils.
- Dissolved phosphorus concentrations were significantly different among the lawn categories; the median from regular-fertilizer sites was twice that from unfertilized or nonphosphorus-fertilizer sites.
- Runoff from lawn sites with nonphosphorus fertilizer applications had a median total phosphorus concentration that was similar to that of unfertilized sites, an indication that nonphosphorus fertilizer use may be an effective, low-cost practice for reducing phosphorus in runoff.

Acknowledgments

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