

# Senate approves changes to water pollution credits system

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The Senate on Tuesday unanimously backed changes to the state's water pollution credits system.

The bill, which next goes to the Assembly, would create a central clearinghouse from which facilities and farmers could buy and sell water pollution credits. Now, those that want to buy and sell credits can do it directly without a third party's involvement. As under current law, those that purchase the credits under the bill would be allowed to exceed certain pollution limits.

Under the bill, the Department of Administration would choose an independent third party to serve as the clearinghouse for the credits. The transactions would occur between the clearinghouse and two types of polluters defined under state law: point sources, such as municipal wastewater treatment plants, and nonpoint sources, such as farmers. Third-party brokers, who would be certified by the DNR, would also be able to sell credits.

The clearinghouse would first work with non-point sources in order to help them determine practices or other means to reduce or remove phosphorus from a certain geographical area in order to generate credits. The entity would then certify the non-point sources' work, before selling the credits to any area point sources, allowing them to exceed certain pollution limits.

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