

**phosphorus (P)**

Chemical element and nutrient essential for all life forms, occurring as orthophosphate, pyrophosphate (P<sub>2</sub>O<sub>7</sub><sup>4-</sup>), triphosphate (P<sub>3</sub>O<sub>10</sub><sup>5-</sup>), and organic phosphate forms; each of these forms, as well as their sum (total phosphorus), is expressed in terms of milligrams per liter (mg/L) elemental phosphorus; occurs in natural waters and wastewater almost solely as phosphates; excess levels of phosphorus in fresh surface waters may contribute to eutrophication.