

**Minutes**  
**Contra Costa Integrated Pest Management Advisory Committee**  
**March 7, 2012**

Members Present: Michael Baefsky, Public Member At-Large; Jerry Casey, General Services Department; Michael Fry, Public Member At-Large; Vince Guise, Agriculture Department; Christine Hagelin, Walnut Creek Open Space Foundation; Jim Hale, County Fish and Wildlife Committee; Dan Jordan, County Clean Water Program; Michael Kent, Health Services; Marj Leeds, Public and Environmental Health Advisory Board; Tunyalee Martin, Public Member At-Large; Joe Yee, Public Works  
(11 members present/8 voting members)

Public Member Alternate Present: Myrto Pretreas

Members Absent: Carlos Agurto, Pestec

Staff Present: Brian Balbas, Public Works; Joe Doser, Environmental Health; Tanya Drlik, IPM Coordinator

Members of the Public Present: Robin Bedell-Waite, resident of El Sobrante; Susan JunFish, Karen Perkins, and Lin Lyons, Parents for a Safer Environment

1. Introductions

2. Announcements

A card to thank Ted Shapas, former Committee member, for his service was circulated.

3. Public comment on items not on the agenda

There was none.

4. Approve minutes from January 18, 2012

A motion was made and seconded (MB/CH) to approve the minutes as written.

The motion carried 7-0 with Jim Hale abstaining.

Susan JunFish asked to have Bellal Daunish's and Katherine Barrett's comments from the last meeting included with the minutes. Staff responded that when copies are received, they will be attached to the minutes.

5. Hear reports from the Agriculture General Services, and Public Works Departments

*Agriculture*

The Department is starting its noxious weed program. Artichoke thistle usually does well in drought years, but so far this year they are not finding a lot of plants. Purple starthistle is coming up early this year. The Department surveys most of the County for noxious weeds, including parkland, open space, and private ranch land. Staff talk to ranchers and land owners. With rare exception they are very appreciative and supportive of the program. The Department has abatement authority, but has rarely had to use it.

Vince Guise showed the Committee a gas cartridge used for ground squirrel control and explained that the Department has these available to sell to ranchers and land owners. The gas cartridges consist of sodium nitrate and charcoal, similar to gun powder. Purchasers are instructed on how to use the cartridges, and the Department emphasizes to them that ground squirrel holes must be in active use by squirrels in order to eliminate unintended harm to non-target creatures. The cartridges are placed in the active burrow, lighted, and then the hole is covered with soil. The ground squirrel is killed by asphyxiation. This is the preferred control method in spring when grasses are green and the soil is moist enough to confine the carbon monoxide sufficiently to be effective. The Department is not able to use this control method much because at this time of year staff are very busy with the noxious weed program.

Ground squirrel bait is used when grasses are dry. Diphacinone, the toxicant in the bait, is an anticoagulant. Green grass contains Vitamin K, an antidote for diphacinone. The bait consists of oat groats to which a very

small amount of diphacinone is added, 0.005% or 0.01%. The Department pre-baits with untreated oat groats in the areas near critical infrastructure where ground squirrels need to be controlled. They check each area two or three days later and bait only where the untreated grain has been consumed. Multiple feedings are required for the bait to be effective, so the area is treated at least one more time two days later.

Myrto Petreas asked about the possibility of using dry ice (carbon dioxide) to kill ground squirrels, but dry ice is not a registered pesticide for ground squirrels and thus would not be legal.

#### *General Services*

Jerry Casey had nothing to report.

Susan JunFish asked about the number of acres of median strips treated with pre-emergents, and asked if the Department has thought about slowly transforming the medians to something that doesn't require pre-emergents, possibly native plants. Joe Yee noted that the medians at Pacheco and Aspen in Martinez are covered with artificial grass.

#### *Public Works*

The Vegetation Management crew just finished spraying pre-emergents along roadsides. Ed Swan was contacted by a Boy Scout troop that wants to build owl boxes, so Ed is looking for appropriate sites to install the boxes.

Susan JunFish would like to know the number of acres treated with pre-emergents. Christine Hagelin would like to have the specific pesticides the Department uses listed in the IPM Plan.

### 6. Hear reports from the subcommittees: Data Management, IPM Decision-Making, Transparency

#### *Data Management*

This committee has developed a draft evaluation tool as a way to evaluate and prioritize IPM work. The committee is in the process of obtaining feedback on the tool from the Departments. The IPM Coordinator will present the document to the Transportation, Water and Infrastructure Committee in April.

#### *IPM Decision-Making*

This committee is currently working on a weed management decision tree for Public Works.

#### *Transparency*

The committee has discussed the possibility of changing the domain name for the IPM website to make it more accessible and is in the process of reviewing the IPM websites for Marin, San Francisco, Santa Clara, and Boulder, CO to develop ideas for Contra Costa's website. Myrto Petreas suggested including the Contra Costa Mosquito and Vector Control website.

### 7. Hear update on the South American spongeplant

Vince Guise met with Assembly member Joan Buchanan in Sacramento to support the bill (AB1540) that would give the Department of Boating and Waterways statutory authority to treat spongeplant when they are out treating other aquatic weeds. Our Board of Supervisors has signed a letter of support for the bill.

This weed is problematic in its native areas of South America, Central America, and southern Mexico. There are no known biological control organisms. Effective biological controls, when found, can be an ideal alternative to pesticides, but these take years to research, test, import and raise, and sadly, the biological control program at the California Department of Food and Agriculture was cut in the last round of State budget cuts.

Spongeplant is in the incipient stage of infestation in the Delta. Action now is critical to limit the spread of this weed in order to prevent damage to the Delta ecosystem and prevent the high pesticide use that will result if it isn't controlled early.

### 8. Hear update on the Public Works grazing study

This was postponed until next meeting.

9. Consider a request from Parents for a Safer Environment to classify several pesticides used by the County as “Bad Actor” pesticides

The County has been tracking its use of “Bad Actor” pesticides since 2000. The Public and Environmental Health Advisory Board used the term “Bad Actor” in its report to the Board in 2001 as a way to distinguish the worst pesticides.

The Pesticide Action Network (PAN) defines “Bad Actor” as the following: a known or probable carcinogen, reproductive or developmental toxicant, cholinesterase inhibitor, known groundwater contaminant, or a pesticide with high acute toxicity.

Susan JunFish asked the County to consider including as “Bad Actors” those pesticides that have a Danger label and those pesticides that are salts of “Bad Actor” pesticides. Although salts of “Bad Actor” pesticides are not designated as “Bad Actors” on PAN’s website, PAN recommends that they be considered as such.

Discussion included the following:

- It is possible to mitigate the hazards to handlers of pesticides labeled “Danger” for eye irritation with training and personal protective equipment. (TM, ML, VG)
- We should figure out the pesticides of concern and work backwards to find replacements or alternatives. (ML)
- What do we want to do with the “Bad Actors”? San Francisco has them on a list to find replacements for or use up. Marin has a list of pesticides that can be used and those that need exemptions. (MB)
- We can focus on “Bad Actors” as a way to prioritize work. (MK)
- We need to work on the “Bad Actor” definition or think about a different way to make decisions about which pesticides to use. (TM)
- How and where the pesticide is used is important to take into consideration. (VG)
- The County’s list of “Bad Actor” pesticides is accurate according to the way the PAN list was understood when the pesticides were designated “Bad Actors” in the County. Does the County want to stay with that list? (RBW)
- Tracking all the pesticides used by the County is the most important thing. (MP)
- CCC has all pesticide use data recorded since 2000 and changing the terminology is a side issue and not germane. (MB)
- Pesticides should be evaluated individually. We need to keep track of what the alternatives are, their costs, etc. Pesticides of concern should be noted as priorities to find replacements for. (VG)

Susan JunFish agreed that mitigation measures are available for pesticides in the acute toxicity category and said she would not prioritize those to be phased out.

No motion was made on this issue.

10. Plan agenda for next meeting

- Update on the grazing project
- Raptor Perch presentation from Beth Slade
- Committee reports
- Report on Vertebrate Pest Conference
- Department reports

Vince Guise suggested that the Committee invite Stella McMillin to speak on anticoagulants, perhaps in July.

Respectfully submitted,  
Tanya Drlik, IPM Coordinator