

Minutes
Contra Costa Integrated Pest Management Advisory Committee
September 5, 2012

Members Present: Michael Baefsky, 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;

(9 members present/7 voting members)

Members Absent: Carlos Agurto, Pestec; Jerry Casey, General Services Department; Michael Fry, Public Member At-Large; Myrto Pretreas, Public Member Alternate

Staff Present: Tanya Drlik, IPM Coordinator; Joe Deviney, Gene Mangini and Larry Yost, Agriculture Department

Members of the Public Present: Susan JunFish and Shirley Shelangoski, Parents for a Safer Environment

1. Introductions

2. Announcements

The IPM Coordinator passed around the nest of a European wool carder bee that was found in a car door. The female gathers plant fibers to make her woolly nest in tight crevices or hollow stems and provisions the egg cells with pollen and nectar. This bee is a recent invader to California and was first collected in 2007 in Sunnyvale.

Jim Hale said that in a couple of months the revision of his pamphlet “Wildlife in Your Backyard” should be ready. Jim is doing a study on barn owls and their diets and will be collecting samples from the large deposit of bones on the roof of 651 Pine in Martinez. These bones are the remains of the meals of barn owls nesting on the building.

Michael Baefsky mentioned that the Marin Water District has released its draft “Marin Municipal Water District Vegetation Management Plan for Watershed Lands”.

3. Public comment on items not on the agenda

Susan JunFish stated that Santa Clara County has eliminated all rodenticides, and asked how aggressive the IPM Advisory Committee has been in outreach to the public about least toxic alternatives to rodenticides, especially for restaurants.

4. Approve minutes from May 2, 2012

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

The motion carried (6-0) with Jim Hale abstaining.

Susan JunFish will forward spelling corrections.

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

Public Works, Creeks and Roadsides

The Vegetation Manager has been using goats and sheep to graze 20 sites—mostly creeks and detention basins—around the County with three more to be grazed in the near future. Each site is different and the animals graze differently at each site, leaving different plants at each location.

The Department is getting ready to hire a Senior Vegetation Management Technician.

Public Works, Grounds

The Grounds Crew is getting ready to sheet mulch the entrance to Summit Center at 2530 Arnold in Martinez. They have an attachment for a Bobcat to remove the dead turf and some of the soil so there will be space for the mulch. They have been stockpiling wood chips at the site for some time.

Public Works, Facilities

The vinegar and Phorid flies that have been plaguing the kitchen of the West County Detention Facility are finally gone. Staff have been keeping the kitchen immaculate (Carlos Agurto of Pestec, said it was the cleanest kitchen he has ever seen). Pestec also used a product called Invade BioFoam® that contains beneficial soil-derived bacteria that digest fats, oils, and grease to try to remove organic debris in the drains that flies might be feeding on.

There was a complaint about fleas biting an employee at 50 Douglas in Martinez, but Carlos has not found any fleas or any other biting creatures in the monitoring traps he put near her desk. No other employees complained of being bitten. He did find a large number of carpet beetle larvae in cracks and crevices around the employee's desk. It may be that the hairs on the larvae and their skins are irritating the employee's skin. He recommended a thorough cleaning of the area and perhaps the use of an air filter near the desk.

Pestec has found a number of sites where people are feeding feral cats next to County buildings. The food is often moldy and infested with flies, ants, and beetles, and the cats may be causing flea problems at one site. Jim Hale noted that the issue of feeding feral cats in the County is on the agenda of the County's Fish and Wildlife Committee.

There have been quite a few calls about "bees" that have turned out to be yellowjackets, and some calls for yellowjackets as well. This appears to be a good year for yellowjackets.

Agriculture

Ground squirrels near critical infrastructure were worse than normal this year. The Department did a formal study on live trapping along a rural road, and Vince Guise would like to present the findings at a future meeting.

The Department has developed a written decision-making process for controlling the Japanese knotweed and woolly distaff thistle that were recently found in the County. The distaff thistle plants were pulled by hand, but the decision has been made to use pesticide on the two populations of Japanese knotweed. The plants have not been sprayed yet because first honey bees and then native bees were working the flowers.

Vince Guise mentioned that a new book on the control of noxious weeds by Joe DiTomaso will be coming out in the fall.

6. Hear report from the IPM Coordinator

The IPM Coordinator

- spent the majority of her time on the three subcommittees and their work products including updating the IPM web pages on the Health Services website.
- spent considerable time answering public records requests from Parents for a Safer Environment
- contacted Al Hom, Program Manager for Alameda County Vector Control, about collaboration on bed bug outreach and education
- has been getting more calls about bed bugs in the past weeks including from several senior facilities; an apartment in Concord, where one tenant said she has had a continuous infestation for 7 years; another apartment building in Concord where the manager wants to hush up the problem; and from a school in Concord where a teacher said that 8 of her students were having bed bug issues at home and found a live bed bug crawling on one of the students
- attended a bed bug training for apartment owners and manager put on by a member of the County's Bed Bug Task Force
- will be attending a two-day bed bug conference in Las Vegas, Nevada that features bed bug researchers from around the world

7. Hear report on injunctions affecting Contra Costa County

The IPM Coordinator explained the law suits brought against EPA and the resulting injunctions that prescribe buffer zones around particular endangered species habitat when using particular pesticides. The IPM Coordinator also explained the process that County Departments go through to ensure they comply with the described buffer zones.

8. Hear report from the IPM Decision Making, Data Management, and Transparency subcommittees

IPM Decision Making

The IPM Coordinator presented a hypothetical decision path for using Garlon 3A along a rural road for broadleaf weeds at the end of the summer. It took about 20 hours to produce this document. The subcommittee had reviewed the document and decided that going through this extreme level of detail for each pesticide or site would be overkill. This kind of detailed analysis could be used instead if anyone has a question about a particular site or pesticide.

Joe Yee felt that developing the Department's flow chart for weed management and the above mentioned document would be good for succession planning. He also noted that we need to trust in the considerable expertise and many years of experience of County pest management staff.

Susan JunFish would like to see the detailed decision path for roads, flood control, airports, and parcels and for each of the Agriculture Department's 14 to 17 species of noxious weeds. She would like more elaboration under physical controls, and wants to see Contra Costa costs for mowing and herbicide use. Under cultural controls she would like more information on planting desirable species because that could solve long term problems in flood control.

Michael Kent asked that the flow chart be revised to include considering the toxicity of pesticides that work for the particular pest.

Data Management

Measuring pounds of pesticide used is not the best metric for an IPM program. The subcommittee has been exploring other ways of quantifying an IPM program, and developed an IPM evaluation tool. The tool can be used by each department to gauge the percent implementation of a set of best management practices and to prioritize implementation of the practices. This document is not intended to be used to compare one department with another.

The subcommittee is recommending that the Departments meet with the subcommittee to pick one priority per year, and discuss metrics to measure progress. Each Department would then develop a written process for improvement.

Joe Yee commented that the evaluation tool is useful because the areas that need more work are clear and the Departments can break off a small piece to focus on.

Shirley Shelangoski said the evaluation tool is good, but that applicators need to be trained in the IPM process and trained in why they are doing the things they do.

Joe Yee and Vince Guise both agreed that understanding why something is done is very important and that it would be beneficial to add more training on this and the IPM process to their current training for staff.

Transparency

With input from the subcommittee the IPM Coordinator updated the IPM web pages on the Health Services web site. The site is undergoing a redesign, and the changes are not live yet. The IPM pages will include more information on IPM and the County's pesticide use and will include the Departmental IPM plans.

The subcommittee is proposing electronic posting of pesticide use as an adjunct to the current posting procedure, and is also proposing the use of permanent signs in locations where there is regular periodic pesticide use. The permanent sign would refer people to the website for up-to-date information on actual pesticide applications. This can save the labor of driving to and from a site to post an application repeatedly

when weather on the day of application is not suitable. The posting information on the website will be more up-to-date, and the public can find out in advance of going to the site if a pesticide application is scheduled. It will also help with the problem of people tearing posting signs down.

The subcommittee presented a draft of the wording of a permanent sign, but Susan JunFish said that “Re-entry when dry” is not safe enough and would rather have “do not enter area”. Vince Guise said that “re-entry when dry” is a legal phrase from the label. The subcommittee will consider these comments.

It was decided that on the day of the actual pesticide application, a paper sign with all the information required by the posting policy should be affixed to the permanent sign.

9. Plan agenda for next meeting

- Specific written recommendations from the 3 subcommittees
- First draft of the annual report

Respectfully submitted,
Tanya Drlik, IPM Coordinator