

Minutes
Contra Costa Integrated Pest Management Advisory Committee
June 26, 2013

Members Present: Michael Baefsky, Public Member At-Large; Scott Cashen, Mt. Diablo Audubon; Michael Fry, Public Member At-Large; Vince Guise, Agriculture Department; Jim Hale, County Fish and Wildlife Committee; Michael Kent, Health Services; Marj Leeds, Public and Environmental Health Advisory Board; Tunyalee Martin, Public Member At-Large; Cece Sellgren, County Clean Water Program; Joe Yee, Public Works

(10 members present/8 voting members)

Members Absent: Luis Agurto, Pestec; Jerry Casey, Public Works Facilities;

Staff Present: Tanya Drlik, IPM Coordinator; Larry Yost, Agriculture Department; Ed Swan, Public Works Department; Jill Ray, Supervisor Andersen's office

Members of the Public: Susan JunFish, Karen Perkins, and Shirley Shelangoski, Parents for a Safer Environment; Robin Bedell-Waite, Citizen

1. Introductions

2. Announcements

From Jim Hale:

- The Sunday Chronicle published a good article on the environmental effects of marijuana farms including the problems with their high use of rodenticides.
- This was a record year for wildlife: mountain lion sightings are up, raccoons numbers have increased, and there are large numbers of bald eagles.

From Michael Kent: On July 18 from 6 to 8 PM at JFK University there will be a forum to discuss pharmaceutical disposal options that could be used in Contra Costa.

3. Public comment on items not on the agenda

There was none.

4. Approve minutes from May 1, 2013

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

The motion carried (7-0). Having been absent on May 1, Jim Hale and Tunyalee Martin abstained. When the minutes were approved, Cece Sellgren was not yet in attendance.

5. Hear report from the IPM Coordinator

- Six applicants for Myrto Petreas' seat (Public Member Alternate) will be interviewed by the Internal Operations Committee of the Board of Supervisors on July 8.
- On June 12, the Board's Transportation, Water and Infrastructure Committee approved the revisions to the 2012 Annual IPM Report. The report will go before the full Board soon.
- The IPM Coordinator continues to work on developing IPM guidelines for city IPM programs with the IPM Coordinators of San Pablo and El Cerrito.
- The IPM Coordinator met with Supervisor Gioia's staff, Richmond Code Enforcement and Dr. Brunner, Director of County Public Health, about three bed bug complaints from the same Richmond hotel. The IPM Coordinator had spoken with the complainants and then with the hotel management who said they were dealing with the problem. Richmond code enforcement agreed to coordinate with the IPM Coordinator and provide regulatory authority in the case of recalcitrant landlords/property owners.

- The Department of Pesticide Regulation has informed Andrew Sutherland of U.C. Cooperative Extension that they will not be able to fund the collaborative bed bug IPM project that involved the County's Bed Bug Task Force, U.C. Cooperative Extension, and Pestec.

6. Hear updates from the Agriculture and Public Works Departments

Agriculture Department—Vince Guise, Agricultural Commissioner

Pest Exclusion

- In the fall of 2006, the Department incorporated dogs into their parcel inspection program for carriers such as Fed Ex, UPS, and the U.S. Postal Service. Contra Costa was the first county in the state to use dogs for parcel inspection. The Department now shares the dog teams with other Bay Area counties. The two original dogs retired in June, and the Department handlers acquired two new dogs along with training from USDA. The handlers are Contra Costa Agriculture Department employees.
- Staff found an exotic mealybug on an agave from a southern California nursery. This mealybug species is not known to be present in Contra Costa. The department had the agave plants destroyed. They also found prohibited citrus plants that were shipped from a quarantine area. They fined the shipper \$2,500 and destroyed the plants.
- In a trap in East County, staff found a vine mealybug, a serious grape pest. This pest came into California in 2000, but until now has not been confirmed in Contra Costa County. In counties that already have vine mealybug, growers, rather than government, are working to eradicate the pest. The affected Contra Costa grower is working on eradicating the pest from his vineyard.

Noxious Weed Program

- Staff have finished work on artichoke thistle, purple starthistle, and a few others.
- All historic areas have been surveyed and treated, if necessary.
- Last year for the first time, the Department surveyed all of Wildcat Canyon and Tilden for artichoke thistle and treated any plants that were found. This year they went through Wildcat Canyon again. East Bay Regional Park District staff are very grateful for the good work the Department has been doing on the thistle.
- Staff started work on purple loosestrife survey and treatment for this year.
- Staff hand pulled about 50 kangaroo thorn plants at Mira Vista Country Club in El Cerrito. This is the only site in the county with this species.
- Staff pulled 546 smooth distaff thistle plants by hand on a ranch on Christie Rd. in Leal Valley. This is up from 42 plants that were pulled last year. This is the only site for this species in the county. This weed was introduced into the county on a tractor that was moved from Fallon, NV. Seed heads are cut and bagged with the goal being not to allow them to touch the ground. With its sharp, stiff spines, this plant endangers cattle and has the potential to cause wounds in the mouth and eyes that can become infected. Grazing removes competition from other plants which allows smooth distaff thistle populations to increase.

Ground Squirrels

- Work will begin next week.

Contra Costa shares a USDA Wildlife Specialist with San Joaquin County. Recently, the Specialist trapped a wild pig in Orinda that was infected with pseudorabies, a disease mostly of swine, but also cattle and sheep (not humans). The Specialist takes very few coyotes and only if they are a human health risk. He also works with the Fish and Wildlife Service. The Specialist spends considerable time advising homeowners about wildlife exclusion and damage prevention.

Cece Sellgren mentioned a call she received about a beaver in an irrigation ditch and asked if she should call the state Department of Fish and Wildlife. Vince Guise said yes, and that his Department is also a good contact.

Scott Cashen noted that moving equipment from place to place can spread noxious weeds and asked if livestock can spread weeds as well. Vince replied that yes, it is possible. Artichoke thistle seeds can be carried in mud on the hooves of animals, and purple starthistle can be moved around in livestock feed. In addition, birds can transport seed, and birds use Japanese dodder as nesting material, which infects new plants.

Public Works, Road and Flood Control Maintenance Division—Joe Yee, Deputy Director

- The Division is currently focused on weed abatement.
- A contractor has finished 22 miles of mowing on the Iron Horse Corridor.
- Staff has been mowing flood control channels. Two fires were started, but were quickly put out.
- Some flood control facilities are being grazed for weed abatement.
- Tree trimming is going on.
- Staff is applying herbicide for cattail control in creek channels. In response to a question from Scott Cashen, Joe explained that cattails impede the flow of water in flood control channels and trap debris which also slows the flow. Cattails are controlled both mechanically and chemically, but the window for mechanical removal is narrow, and that technique must be supplemented with herbicide in order to meet the Division's goals. Scott Cashen also asked about compliance with the Migratory Bird Act. Joe explained that before any work can be done in the County's creeks and flood control channels, Division staff must carry out a habitat assessment of the area. If staff observe nesting and/or wildlife habitat, the Division must consult with the state Fish and Wildlife Department before proceeding with work. For example, burrowing owls were found in a particular flood control basin, and the Division used goats instead of mowing in order to prevent harm to the owls.
- The second year of the three year grazing study has been completed. Cece Sellgren will provide the Committee with an update later this year, but not at the Committee's September meeting.

Public Works Grounds Division—Kevin Lachapelle, Grounds Manager

- Three staff members retired last year—1 lead and 2 gardeners. Grounds now has permission to fill those vacancies.
- The Division has approval to hire 1 applicator.
- They have several tree companies that now provide them with a steady supply of wood chips to use as mulch for weed control. The Division was able to purchase a chipper last year so that all woody prunings are chipped on site for mulch.

Susan JunFish asked about rodenticides in parks. Grounds does not deal with vertebrate pest management in parks. That work is performed by a contractor to Special Districts.

7. Hear updates from the Data Management and IPM Decision Making subcommittees

Data Management subcommittee update

- The next meeting of the subcommittee is in July, the date to be determined.
- The IPM Annual Report has been revised and approved by TWIC. Next it will go before the full Board.
- The Departments are doing a good job of IPM and pesticide use figures do not give the whole picture of their work. The subcommittee is looking for better ways to evaluate the County's IPM program. The subcommittee has reviewed annual reports from other counties but has found nothing particularly new or innovative for evaluating IPM.
- The subcommittee has discussed tracking implementation of IPM best practices using the IPM Priority Assessment Tool that the subcommittee developed. The subcommittee has also discussed how to include metrics to determine if sufficient funding is available for IPM activities.
- The subcommittee has discussed other items and metrics to be included in IPM Annual Report, such as the pesticide use data spreadsheet, graphs of pesticide use, non-chemical management by acreage, the decision making documents the Departments are preparing, descriptive explanations of research projects and success stories, and for the Agriculture Department, more data from their annual crop report.

- The subcommittee has decided that because the Departments and their pest management programs are so different, the same metrics across all departments may not apply.

Some of the points from the Committee discussion were as follows:

- Marin County tracks hours for various pest management activities in their monthly reports. (MB)
- Hours correlated with linear feet or acres can be useful for cost effectiveness. (CS)
- The Departments already track labor associated with pest management activities in their databases. (TD)
- A virtual library of information on pest management issues would perhaps be helpful. (SC)
 - Not sure how this would fit into IPM program evaluation. (MK)
 - The IPM Coordinator keeps much of this information on her computer, and if anyone has specific requests, she can provide what is available. (TD)
- For the Agriculture Department's Noxious Weed Program the goals are eradication, stopping infestations, or containing the leading edge of an infestation, whereas Public Works is doing maintenance work on weeds. When Agriculture Department staff go to a ranch they may spend 30 minutes spraying weeds and 7 ½ hours monitoring. The way the Department keeps records may not reveal all the monitoring that takes place. (VG)
- Parents for a Safer Environment wants graphs with the name of each pesticide used and the amounts over 6 to 8 years with an explanation of why the amounts and kinds of pesticides vary. (SJF)

Decision Making subcommittee update

- In each meeting the subcommittee has been reviewing a decision making document from one of the IPM programs. So far the subcommittee has reviewed ground squirrels and perennial pepperweed from the Agriculture Department and rats and mice from Pestec. There will be 2 more meetings to go over the Grounds and Public Works documents.
- The subcommittee has seen that decision making is particular to the site and the pest. It is obvious that a great deal of knowledge and experience is involved in making these decisions.
- The decision making document covers everything the committee is interested in and the form is working well. It guides a conversation about the situation which is a useful and informative process. The model is working really well.

Some of the points from the Committee discussion were as follows:

- The process for the Agriculture Department has been to present how the decision was made and the alternatives that were considered. The discussion in the subcommittee has been good. Hearing comments from the subcommittee helps in rethinking the document and making it better. It takes time and effort to develop the document, but it allows others to see the details of the decision making process. (VG)
- The document needs to have explicit cost considerations/cost effectiveness information added. (CS, RBW, MK, MF)
- It would be useful to have information in the background section on whether the particular situation is part of a countywide management program or a single site/single pest. (MF)
- The document captures so much of the information that is important in an IPM decision. (MF)
- The document comprises all that Parents for a Safer Environment wants. The chemical profile needs more information about chronic toxicity and more quantitative information, such as Koc values.
- On the chemical profile, the amount of pesticide used in the county should be removed because it will have to be updated every year. (MK)

Karin Perkins asked if the County uses volunteers to help reduce costs.

- The County's Fish and Wildlife Committee started the Watershed Forum and has addressed using volunteers to remove non-native species through creek groups. (JH)
- The County supports watershed groups and the infrastructure exists to connect with schools and other youth to promote volunteering in watershed activities. (CS)
- There are liability and safety issues with volunteers in some situations, such as weed removal on roadsides. (RBW)

8. Plan agenda for next meeting—September 4

- Final recommendations from each subcommittee in preparation for the annual report
- Review the ordinance vs. policy issue
- Short report from the IPM Coordinator on rodenticides use in County parks

In November

- Annual Report
- Update on grazing study

Respectfully submitted,
Tanya Drlik, IPM Coordinator