

Minutes
Contra Costa County IPM Advisory Committee
Subcommittee on Transparency
June 4, 2014

Members present: Cheng Liao, Patti TenBrook, Scott Cashen, Matthew Slattengren, Cece Sellgren

Staff present: Tanya Drlik, IPM Coordinator; Joe Yee, Public Works; Jill Ray, Supervisor Andersen's office

Members of the Public: Shirley Shelangoski, Parents for a Safer Environment (PfSE)

1. Introductions

2. Public comment on items not on the agenda, but under the purview of the committee

There was none.

3. Approve minutes from 2/26/14 and 4/2/14

It was moved and seconded to approve the minutes from 4/2/14 (MS/PT).

Ayes: Liao, TenBrook, Slattengren, Sellgren

Noes: none

Abstention: Cashen (absent on 4/2/14)

Motion passed.

The minutes from 2/26/14 could not be approved because they were not included in the agenda packet.

4. Hear report from Public Works on exporting pesticide use data to an Excel spreadsheet and the cost of fabrication and installation of permanent posting signs

Joe Yee reported for Public Works.

- Cost of permanent signs will be about \$150/sign for fabrication and installation.
- Joe Yee provided Shirley Shelangoski a copy of a 72-page report on pesticides used in calendar year 2013 by the Public Works Road and Flood Control Maintenance Division. The report divides pesticide use by "Activity Codes" (see below).
- Information is collected in a computerized maintenance management system called Maintstar. Maintstar began as a work planning tool; therefore, it is very difficult to produce reports that the system was not intended to produce. Maintstar has a "print to Excel" function but the result is difficult to read and understand because of formatting problems inherent in the function.
- Information on when and where the Division sprays and how much herbicide is used is collected every time a crew goes out. The data is entered into Maintstar.
- Pesticide use information is collected by 4 different Activity Codes for weed spraying:
 - Access (access roads along creek channels)
 - Creek (banks of creeks and flood control channels)
 - Aquatic (herbicides used for weeds growing in the water)
 - Road (County roads other than those along channels)
- Data are collected on labor hours, equipment hours, rental equipment used, work order #s, internal account numbers, and materials used. Maintstar records the name of the pesticide used and the quantity but cannot report on the units for that quantity. It was not intended as a pesticide use reporting program.
- The creek reach locations where pesticides are used are more concise than the road data because creek locations are subdivided in to segments (reaches) but roads are not subdivided.

- The Maintstar report provided to PfSE is a hard copy and could be provided as a PDF. The County provides documents as PDFs to prevent them from being manipulated or changed.
- The Division has data collectors with GPS tracking on two trucks, but they have not been providing consistent data (the collectors were designed for agriculture and not for use on roadsides, and the Division has not found any data collectors specifically designed for roadside applications). Joe Yee does not yet have confidence in the accuracy/consistency of the data from the two trucks.
- Simply having a GPS device collect location points of where the weed spray vehicles drive would not be useful to Public Works. When the crew uses contact herbicides, they are constantly turning the sprayer on and off because they do not spray areas where there are no weeds. They also drive roads on a regular basis and do not necessarily spray every time.
- If there are complaints from residents, the Vegetation Management Supervisor goes out to meet and talk with the resident to resolve the issue.
- The public has asked for information that is available in Maintstar, and the Division has provided that information. Other than residents of Canyon last year, PfSE has been the only public requesting information.
- The Public Records Act does not require County staff to produce reports that do not already exist in order to satisfy a request from the public.
- Pesticide use figures do not tell the whole IPM story. They only provide data on how much pesticide is being used. They do not provide information on the extent to which other techniques can be or are used, nor on changes that affect how much pesticide is used, such as weather, weed species, or available labor or funds.

5. Continue to discuss the process of addressing public concerns

The committee discussed the meaning of “transparency”:

- People who want to follow a process should be able to do so and should be able to connect the dots.
- County staff should be able to communicate to the public what they (staff) are doing, what the costs are, what documentation is necessary, what the results are.
- Information is conveyed as honestly as possible and everyone has access to the same information.
- Information should not be hidden. Staff must provide information to the public promptly when it is requested, but should not have to create new documents and reports that don’t exist. Staff have limited time and resources.

Patti TenBrook will draft a definition of transparency for the next meeting.

The committee asked PfSE that if they have disagreements with the County to please provide evidence and examples with names and dates. A chart would be ideal.

The IPM Coordinator presented a chart with the dates, locations, and number of signs used for posting pesticide use in 2013. Shirley Shelangoski asked if the County is spraying anywhere and not posting. To the best of the IPM Coordinator’s knowledge, all areas covered by the County’s posting policy are being posted. Joe Yee noted that East Bay Regional Parks treats the area on either side of the Iron Horse Trail and does not post. He will discuss this with the Iron Horse Corridor Coordinating Committee.

6. Plan next meeting agenda

- Report from PfSE on the report given to them by Public Works in this meeting.
- Approve the minutes from both 2/26/14 and 6/4/14
- Definition of transparency
- September 3 report to the IPM Advisory Committee (what the subcommittee has accomplished and any recommendations to the Committee)