

November 4, 2015

Public Comment

I thank the staff and volunteers who have spent the time to investigate alternatives and worked to reduce pesticide usage in our county.

In the staff document provided titled 2015 IPM Program Accomplishments, I was very surprised to read that staff believes after reviewing programs throughout the "Bay Area and the nation," that "there is nothing unique or innovative in the Bay Area or the nation." I see a very serious innate problem with this type of perspective. For one, carbon dioxide asphyxiation for controlling burrowing rodents is a highly successful alternative to rodenticide usage that is very risky for secondary poisoning of predators. The City of San Jose is working with this innovative method among many other municipalities. Marin, San Francisco, and Santa Clara counties use trapping and innovative and efficient methods to make it efficient. Please delete this sentence and consider the impact of what thinking this way would do for your motivation and others in seeking alternatives that are constantly being developed throughout the region, the U.S. and throughout the world.

Even former Public Works staff, Chuck Jeffries reported to the IPM Advisory Committee years back that the City of Palo Alto was having success using an innovative method in keeping burrowing rodents away from protected areas by using simple fabric screens that provide the illusion of blockages that deter them from burrowing in that direction. After his report, I was surprised that there was no follow-up by staff to discuss this method working elsewhere and pilot it in our county.

Looking at the agenda, it appears that you will be going through the annual practice of prioritizing the topics in which the Subcommittees of this Advisory Committee would address in more detail. Please consider where the largest amount of pesticides are applied and where applications are causing the highest risk to the public, pets, wildlife and the environment. I hope you each continue to stay on point to help decrease the pesticide usage by county programs. I hope that you are interested in investigating yourself and asking questions to staff about what alternatives are being tried and used successfully elsewhere.

I thank you for your work and hope that you keep on point to reduce the usage of pesticides in our county pest control programs.

Susan JunFish

My name is Michael Sullivan and I have been attending the county meetings that involve pesticide usage for the past three years and appreciate the work that the IPM Advisory Committee is assigned to do, which is to protect public health and the environment while determining the best ways to control pests.

In the 2015 Accomplishment paper under section E, it refers to how the IPM program has become transparent by including more information on the website and developing and posting. When did this happen? It implies that it happened in 2012 or 2014 but we have not seen this as recently as September, 2015. Please make those corrections and be more clear on what the county is now posting under this transparency section.

Under section F, staff again states that the IPM program cost accounting "did not find overall, programmatic changes that could be implemented across the board to reduce herbicide use; labor, energy, and water costs far outweigh the cost of herbicide applications."

I ask staff and I hope you question this statement also, to provide documentation on exactly where and what any staff or committee members investigated to conclude that programmatic changes to reduce herbicides were not possible. This statement is very disappointing and discourages any curiosity and future investigation. Please provide some information on how you came to this conclusion. I attended the weed subcommittee meetings and staff directed the committee to only address water saving issues. Although water conservation is a major concern, shouldn't a Committee tasked to address herbicide usage consider the issues surrounding herbicides? Toxicity, amount, cost, and risks are all issues that were not addressed.

Can you provide the documentation of how much it's costing the county to purchase herbicides, to train applicators, to have permits to be able to use pesticides, to address writing and addressing the permit documents, any illnesses reported by applicators and worker's comp filings? Also how about documenting the potential costs in degrading the health of the public, pets, wildlife, and our waters? There have been publications addressing these issues, so it is not impossible to speculate and estimate dollar costs on the consequences to our economy from pesticides.

In the Researching and Experimenting with Alternatives to Pesticides Section, staff states that she created the IPM Coordinators' networking group to share information. This sounds like a great venue to learn of innovative methods being piloted and successes shared. I would like to know when this group was formed and who participates. It would be helpful to announce meeting times to the IPM Advisory Committee list-serve so that the committee members and the public can attend, even if it is just listening and learning. With this great resource, I would venture to guess that innovations and alternatives to pesticide usage would be shared and learned.

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Michael Sullivan,
Lafayette resident