

Minutes
Contra Costa County IPM Advisory Committee
Subcommittee on IPM Decision-Making
May 11, 2017

Members present: Andrew Sutherland (chair), Susan Captain, Jim Donnelly, Larry Yost, Jim Cartan

Members absent: None

Staff present: Victoria Skerritt, Public Works, Tanya Drlik, IPM Coordinator

Members of the public present: Susan JunFish, Parents for a Safer Environment; Karolina Park, Holistic Moms Network; Tabitha Kix, Walnut Creek resident

1. Introductions

2. Public comment on items not on the agenda

Karolina Parks read a statement. See attached.

A number of days after the January 20, 2017 meeting, Susan JunFish sent the IPM Coordinator a written public comment which Susan JunFish had not read at the meeting. The comment was entered into the record by Jim Cartan. See attached.

3. Approve minutes from January 20, 2017

Susan JunFish asked to have the following added to Public Comment in item number 4:

“The fall IPM Advisory Committee voted in the November 2016 meeting that rodenticide usage outdoors be a top priority to address in 2017. The community wish to see this item addressed by the Decision Making Committee.”

A motion was made and seconded to approve the January 20, 2017 minutes as amended (JD/SC)

The motion carried:

Ayes: Yost, Donnelly, Sutherland, Captain

Noes: None

Abstentions: Cartan

Absent: None

4. Review the final document detailing the committee’s suggestions for changes/additions to the County’s Landscape Standards

The committee discussed the document and made several more changes. See the attached final document.

Victoria Skerritt from Public Works Special Districts noted that the concern is always whether the Department can afford to do what is asked, but she added that Public Works has found that all the changes are reasonable.

Public Comment

Susan JunFish mentioned the following:

- *The community is well aware of licensing and that pest control operators are using chemicals legally, but it’s different when chemicals are broadcast sprayed.*
- *The County needs to have documentation that all least toxic alternatives have been tried before pesticides are used.*
- *There is no mention of chronic toxicity in the document.*

Andrew Sutherland noted that Section 2.02 B says “The acute toxicity of a pesticide, along with information about chronic toxicity, where available, should be considered in the selection of chemicals to be used.”

The committee agreed to remove the words “where available”.

A motion was made and seconded to accept the revised recommendations as presented to the committee and amended by the committee today and to submit the document to Public Works. (JD, AS)

The motion carried unanimously.

The committee would like a copy of the final document that goes to Public Works.

5. Discuss the draft roadside decision document

The committee discussed the decision-making document for roadside vegetation management and asked for a number of things to be added. The committee asked that, if possible, the IPM Coordinator send out the fire regulations to committee members before the agenda packet.

One hour will be allotted on the next agenda to discuss the rest of the document. All members should come with any questions they have after studying the document.

Public Comment

Susan JunFish mentioned the following:

- *Public Works needs to look at the areas where people walk. There are places where roads are next to trails where people walk, jog, and ride bikes.*
- *Public Works should look at competitive planting. Washington State uses this strategy.*
- *Is bare ground really necessary?*

Peter Gollinger responded that the regulations state that a swath along the side of the road must be vegetation free.

6. Discuss Santa Clara roadside vegetation management

The committee discussed the attached document. Some of the comments from the committee and staff included the following:

- Contra Costa County (CCC) does not contract out rights-of-way vegetation management. In the past the County did use inmate labor, but it became very expensive the way the Sheriff structured it. (P. Gollinger)
- Budget is the constraining factor in CCC. Funds for road maintenance, including vegetation management, come from the gas tax which has not been raised for many years. In addition, cars are more fuel efficient now, and there are hybrid and electric vehicles on the roads. All this leads to dwindling funds for road maintenance throughout the entire state. The state is working on fixing the problem. (P. Gollinger)
- Santa Clara has 8 mowers. CCC has 2 mowers that are quite old. (P. Gollinger)
- There are trade-offs with using mowing to a greater extent. The County's carbon footprint would increase. (J. Cartan, IPM Coordinator)
- CCC mows very few roadsides because the County has lumpy, bumpy roads that twist and wind. Mowing is mainly used for trouble spots such as areas where willows are growing into the road, or for blackberries and broom.
- Note that the cost per acre for mowing in Santa Clara was \$1800 in 2016, compared to CCC's cost per acre of \$1445. The difference may be because Santa Clara is mowing virtually year around and must mow many sections over and over. This is because Santa Clara does not have the capacity to mow all their roads at the appropriate time and vegetation regrows and must be mowed again. (P. Gollinger, IPM Coordinator)
- Note also that Santa Clara is fully staffed at 110, but currently has around 85 due to the difficulty in hiring people because county benefits and pay are declining. CCC is fully staffed at 86, but there are only 57 positions filled. The number of crew members who can be used for vegetation management is just 3. (P. Gollinger)
- The committee can make a case for the Public Works Department to have more staff dedicated to vegetation management. (A. Sutherland)
- The IPM Coordinator will research the process for asking the Board of Supervisors for more resources.

Public Comment

Susan JunFish mentioned the following:

- *Why is Marin County not included in the matrix of counties and their vegetation management practices?*
- *The Santa Clara document mentions 10 shattered windshields a year but doesn't mention the consequences of using herbicides. The document that will be sent to the Board must be balanced.*
- *Climate is the most important environmental concern, but pesticides are greenhouse gasses too. The County could get electric vehicles.*
- *The Santa Clara document should include the number of pounds of pesticide used on roadsides.*

7. Discuss steam and electro-thermal weeding

The committee agreed to wait to discuss this at the next meeting.

8. Discuss a secondary charge for the committee for the coming year

The committee agreed to add rodent control as another issue to explore. The IPM Coordinator noted that the vast majority of rodenticide used by the County is used for grounds squirrels on critical infrastructure, and that the Decision-Making subcommittee had already created a decision making document for ground squirrels some years ago.

The IPM Coordinator will review the document with the Agriculture Department to make sure it is up to date and send it out to the committee members.

A subsidiary charge will be to create a memo to the Board of Supervisors with recommendations about funding vegetation management.

9. Plan next agenda

Next Meeting: June 29, 2017, 10:00 am to noon

- Review the roadside vegetation management decision document (60 minutes)
- Discuss steam and electro-thermal weeding (15 minutes)
- Discuss the ground squirrel decision document (15 minutes)
- Discuss how to communicate with the Board (15 minutes)
- Other business (15 minutes)