

School Pesticide Monitor

A Bi-monthly Bulletin on Pesticides and Alternatives



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Beyond Pesticides / National Coalition Against the Misuse of Pesticides
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Branford, CT Finds Success with Organic Playing Fields

Propelled by state legislation prohibiting pesticides use on school grounds, Branford, Connecticut is a model for others around the country in managing town playing fields, parks and public lawns without using pesticides. The town's remarkable success in implementing an organic land management approach has resulted in healthier turf and lower maintenance costs.

Alex Palluzzi, Jr., director of the Branford Parks and Recreation Department, says he once was "on the other side," but now is motivated by the results he sees with organic and wants to get others to do the same. The town's organic program took off after a pilot project converting one

field to organic. Its success proved to Mr. Palluzzi that organic land management works. Now, all 24 of the town's fields are maintained with organic management practices.

"We have not used pesticides in years," says Mr. Palluzzi. Instead, the town relies on properly aerating the soil, overseeding, mowing the turf high, adding compost and testing the soil. The town collects residents' leaves for its compost and mulch, which helps keep the program's cost low.

Chuck Sherwood, field maintenance subcontractor, states in an article in *The Sound*, "When you put down this organic matter, we simply [find] you don't need

pesticides and these other fertilizers. With synthetics you are creating an artificial environment and when you lay down pesticides you are knocking out beneficial organisms too. Organics has become the better value." Organic turf management results in healthier soils, which produce thicker turf, disease resistance, less soil compaction and a softer playing field. Mr. Sherwood goes on to say that, "You have much healthier root systems that can sustain the repeated us."

Throughout the country there has been a growth in the pesticide-free turf movement.

For more information on organic lawn care, contact *Beyond Pesticides*.

Document Seeks To Bolster School IPM Adoption Nationwide

Without federal legislation mandating that schools adopt safer pest management strategies, only 42 percent of U.S. school districts are required to implement some level of an integrated pest management (IPM) program. And even within those school districts, some schools may be using toxic pesticides and not following a true IPM program that uses non-chemical pest prevention and management strategies and the least-toxic pesticide as a last resort. As a result, a diverse group of school pest management stakeholders have developed a new document, *Pest Management Strategic Plan for IPM in Schools*, that they hope will help reinvigorate the adoption of IPM programs, aiming for full implementation in all U.S. schools by 2015.

The school IPM PSMP document is an in-depth look at specific pest management strategies for schools to use, and actions and timelines for a coordinated effort to getting all schools to adopt an IPM program. The strategic plan hinges

on garnering leaders in school administration, school health, parents, teachers, custodians, food service staff, state agricultural extension staff, regulators, architects, IPM professionals and other interested individuals to help increase awareness and generate a commitment to school IPM.

A group of more than 30 professionals, including Beyond Pesticides staff, have been involved in the development process for the school IPM PSMP, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) IPM Program, the four USDA Regional IPM Centers, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and spearheaded by the IPM Institute.

IPM programs are proven to be affordable and cost-effective. IPM can eliminate pests and pesticide-related hazards to children as it relies on pest prevention, monitoring, and control through effective education, sanitation, facility maintenance, mechanical controls, and other non-chemical methods.

The least-toxic pesticide is only used as a last resort after nontoxic options have been exhausted. Research and demonstration projects show that schools with IPM programs have up to 90% fewer pest problems and pest-related allergens compared to schools using pesticides as their sole method of pest management.

"With IPM," states Dawn H. Couge, Ph.D., urban entomologist with the University Arizona and co-editor of the document, "school staff and faculty report cleaner, better maintained facilities and better communication within the school community."

At the heart of the document are extensive details to understanding common school pest biology, inspection and monitoring, and pest prevention that are key to successfully implementing IPM. This section of the document is an incredibly valuable tool to learning about an array of non-chemical pest management strategies.

Unfortunately, the document does
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You currently have a free subscription to Beyond Pesticides' *School Pesticide Monitor*. We hope this bi-monthly bulletin provides you with information on pesticide issues of importance to the health and safety of students and school staff. It is our goal to provide a range of information, resources and organizing and technical assistance that will help you develop safer and more effective school pest management policies and practices.

WE NEED TO HEAR FROM YOU: Beyond Pesticides is currently updating the *School Pesticide Monitor* mailing list. Please contact us to ensure that you continue to receive your copy of the *Monitor* in the appropriate format. We are converting the *Monitor* to a digital layout. If you would like to receive your copy via email, please provide us with your email address. Subscription is free, so let us know if there are others you think would benefit from receiving the publication. If you do not wish to continue your subscription, please contact us. Otherwise, we will continue to send your copy by postal mail.

WHY CONTINUE YOUR SUBSCRIPTION: Beyond Pesticides' *School Pesticide Monitor* is designed to be used by parents, public health activists, school staff and administrators, policy makers and others working toward the adoption and implementation of safer school pest management programs. The *Monitor* will continue to cover current information on what is happening on the local, state and federal level with adoption and implementation of policies regarding school integrated pest management (IPM) and pesticide use notification. Topics also include specific school pest problems and implementation techniques, IPM cost examples, pesticide profiles, action alerts and children's environmental health studies. Individuals and groups are welcome to submit articles to the *Monitor*.

CONTACT BEYOND PESTICIDES TODAY: Please update your *School Pesticide Monitor* subscription status by email: kowens@beyondpesticides.org; phone 202-543-5450; fax 202-543-4791; or mail: 701 E Street S.E. Washington DC 20003.

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not clearly state the acute and chronic health effects of the pesticides listed in the document. IPM implementers using this document should be wary of reaching for potentially harmful chemicals. Other concerns regarding the document surround the fact that toxic pesticides are listed as management tools for turf and landscape programs, yet these sites can be managed without any pesticides. (See previous article.) Examples prove that there is never a real justification or need to use toxic pesticides in a school environment.

Children face unique hazards from pesticide exposure. They take in more pesticides relative to their body weight than adults in the food they eat and air they breathe. Their developing organ

systems often make them more sensitive to toxic exposure. The U.S. EPA, National Academy of Sciences, and American Public Health Association, among others, have voiced concerns about the danger that pesticides pose to children. The body of evidence in the scientific literature shows that pesticide exposure can adversely affect a child's neurological, respiratory, immune, and endocrine system, even at low levels.

According to USDA, pest management practices in schools are in need of improvement; more than 50 studies have documented deficiencies, including unmanaged pest infestations, unsafe and illegal use of pesticides and unnecessary pesticide exposure. "Poor pest management and the use of pesticides can affect

students' learning abilities and long-term health, especially asthma, which is the number one cause of school absences," states Colien Hefferan, with USDA.

Federal agencies, such as EPA, USDA and CDC have been recommending schools adopt IPM for years. According to Beyond Pesticides' research, only 14 states require that schools adopt IPM programs and seven states recommend school IPM. Without federal legislation, like the proposed School Environment Protection Act (SEPA), school IPM adoption will likely remain spotty as it is now. For nationwide change, passage of SEPA is critical to moving IPM ahead.

The IPM PMSP document can be found at <http://www.ipmcenters.org/pmssp/pdf/USs->