



February 28, 2014

Senator Gerratana, Representative Johnson and members of the Public Health Committee

I am writing on behalf of the over 800 members of CT NOFA, the Northeast Organic Farming Association of Connecticut, to support **HB-5330** to ban the use of toxic lawn care pesticides on Connecticut's parks, playgrounds, athletic fields and municipal greens. This ban will help protect the health of children and other living things who use these facilities.

Since 1990 CT NOFA members have been involved in managing landscapes organically, without the use of toxic pesticides. The benefits in terms of soil health, worker health and public safety have been clear for over 20 years.

Since 2000, the NOFA Organic Land Care Program has educated thousands of land care professionals in organic methods in response to both the professionals and the public who ask for non-toxic lawn care. (Visit [organiclandcare.net](http://organiclandcare.net) to learn more about this program and the many resources there for citizens and professionals. Many of these resources were supported by the US EPA in order to protect Long Island Sound from the effects of lawn care chemicals.)

Almost every month we learn about another way that toxic pesticides interfere with human health. We have very little knowledge of all the negative effects of individual pesticides and know even less about their effects in combination. (For example, a recent study on bees found that it was combinations of fungicides that make them more vulnerable to diseases. And it had been thought that fungicides designed to kill fungi wouldn't have any effect on bees. )

The essay pasted below describes the kind of situation this bill will prevent. In this case it was nearly 100 5th and 6th grade students in Bridgeport who were visiting Beardsley Park for an end of the year nature walk and picnic. The herbicides being applied that day were dangerous, improperly applied, ineffective and polluting. Why should taxpayers support this really stupid way of doing things.

Reluctant communities, toxic chemical companies and recalcitrant maintenance people need the wisdom of HB-5330 in order to keep our children safe. Thank you.

<http://archive.sare.org/sanet-mg/archives/html-home/35-html/0209.html>  
Pesticides in Our Parks

Living on the Earth, July 9, 1999:

Pesticides in Our Parks

by Bill Duesing

Bridgeport's Beardsley Park stretches south for over a mile along the Pequonnock River, from suburban Trumbull into the gritty center of Connecticut's largest, and one of its most economically-challenged cities. The Pequonnock River empties into Long Island Sound about five miles south of the park. On the east bank, well-trimmed lawn, large trees and rock outcrops roll gently down to ballfields and the river. The west side of the park and the river has been run over by an eight-lane highway. One morning in June I was scouting out a picnic site for Suzanne's fifth-grade and her colleague's sixth-grade classes. It was easy to find the right combination of tables, water fountain, ball fields and access to the nature trail. Beardsley Park is a beautiful place, and it was practically empty this weekday. Suzanne and her students feel lucky to have the park within walking distance of school.

As I headed back to Thomas Hooker, I noticed a landscape crew in a small truck spreading something on the grass under the trees. Thinking of the

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kids about to walk over to the park, I talked to the men while they were refilling the spreader. It took four of them and a large dump truck to keep the application rig supplied. There were already lots of empty bags around. I saw that they had contained a 22 percent nitrogen fertilizer mixed with a broadleaf weed killer called Trimec(tm).

I questioned the workmen about the wisdom of applying soluble nitrogen, a serious environmental pollutant, especially in Long Island Sound. I also asked about spreading a chemical which is designed to kill many useful and edible plants. Of the 33 so-called "weeds" this poison claims to eliminate, at least 15 are edible and many others are medicinal or simply beautiful. The crew members said that they were just following orders-- "doing their jobs." However, they were interested when I pointed out that the herbicide label required applicators to wear long-sleeved shirts and wash their clothes separately. Several workers were wearing short sleeves. I reported this situation to the students, who were anxiously awaiting this field trip, and encouraged them to stay off the grass and wash well when they got home. We couldn't say "no" to sixty kids on such a beautiful day. Fortunately, most of their direct contact with the ground involved rolling down hills which were too steep for the pesticide applicators.

Later research revealed that Trimec(tm) is actually three herbicides mixed together: 2, 4-D, dicamba and mecoprop. They are all chemically related and purposely cause "abnormal growth." One half of Agent Orange, 2,4-D is rated very hazardous. Dicamba seems to be toxic to most animal systems and organs. Trimec(tm) also contains 60 percent so-called "inert" ingredients. "Inert" is just a regulatory code word that allows the chemical industry to withhold ingredient information. Some of them are certainly not "inert." No safety tests have been done on this complex chemical cocktail of powerful, synthetic, biotoxic substances.

Trimec(tm)'s label warned against applying when conditions "favor drift." That day, there was a steady breeze blowing from the northwest. The label also said to avoid contact with skin, eyes or clothing, and to avoid applications over the roots of desirable trees. Although the label on a pesticide container carries the force of Federal law, it seemed that all of the warnings were being ignored.

Five days later, most of the so-called "weeds" in the park were still thriving, although the grass was very brown from being close-cropped during the drought. Of course, both the fertilizer and this herbicide are less effective in dry conditions.

A much more ecologically-beneficial, and less expensive approach would include cutting the grass higher, adding limestone if needed and sowing a bit of clover at the appropriate time.

Spreading soluble nitrogen mixed with toxic herbicides is legal, culturally-correct and encouraged by the chemical industry. It is, however, ecologically, medically, economically and socially insane, especially in this Bridgeport park.

The potential for negative effects from just this one application is enormous. And, it's probably also happening in a park near you. It will only stop when enough of us speak up and object.

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