



**FOR THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
PUBLIC HEARING TESTIMONY OF RIVERS ALLIANCE OF CONNECTICUT
MARCH 11, 2015**

Rivers Alliance of Connecticut is the statewide, non-profit coalition of river organizations, individuals, and businesses formed to protect and enhance Connecticut's waters by promoting sound water policies, uniting and strengthening the state's many river groups, and educating the public about the importance of water stewardship.

SB 366 AAC Extending the Ban on Lawn Care Pesticides to Schools that House Grades Nine to Twelve Inclusive, and to State Facilities. *Support in part.*

HB 1063 AAC The Application of Pesticides on School Grounds and Certain Public Spaces, Authorizing the Use of Certain Microbials, and Reestablishing the Pesticide Advisory Council. *Oppose in part.*

HB 5286 AA Prohibiting The Import and Sale of Cosmetics Containing Microbeads. *Support.*

Dear Senator Kennedy, Representative Albis, and Members of the Committee:

As a child, during summer vacation, I wondered why God made wasps. I strongly supported their slaughter via Flit and Raid spray; I breathed in the fumes contentedly as the wasps died. My mother did the wasp spraying while my father wielded a large dandelion extractor to improve the lawn. We children could earn a penny for each dandelion removed. Almost all the adults smoked.

Today we know that cigarettes are poison, dandelions are fantastically nourishing, and it's a bad idea to inhale wasp spray or any pesticide. In fact, starting with Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* in 1962, study after study has implicated pesticides and related pharmaceuticals in harm to the normal, healthy development of plants, animals, and humans. The science is all trending toward one conclusion. Pesticide exposure is dangerous for children, pregnant women, kittens, honey bees, fish, birds, butterflies, frogs, and more. The products are based on or contain carcinogens, neurotoxins, and endocrine disrupters. Most are particularly harmful to aquatic ecology and are prime suspects or proven perpetrators in reproductive anomalies in fish and amphibians. I cite some science findings at the end of this document.

The central mission of Rivers Alliance is to protect public trust waters and aquatic life. This work coincides with the goal of protecting children from needless exposure to pesticides. The United States applies one billion pounds of pesticides each year. These toxins are in all our waterways and much of our present or potential drinking water. We breathe, absorb, and ingest them every day. When pesticides are applied to lawn, they frequently travel into water and air. They are not confined to killing creatures in the soil.

Another very important group in Connecticut that has taken on this same kind of dual mission is Clean Up Sound and Harbors (CUSH), based in Stonington. As the name implies, CUSH is focused on the environmental, economic, health, and societal benefits of a clean Sound, thriving fisheries, water recreation and tourism. They have been sponsoring workshops for facilities managers in four towns: Stonington, Groton, North Stonington, and Westerly RI. The immediate past president of CUSH, Fran Hoffman, and Stonington Superintendent Van Riley both observed in conversation this week that progress toward a totally pesticide-free environment has been excellent. Partly this is because groundskeepers are becoming more familiar with organic concepts and methods. And the administration, led by Mr. Riley, keeps parents informed on the issues and what the schools are doing. Mr. Riley said that in his many years as superintendent in different Connecticut towns he has found that families are very aware of the dangers of toxins, and they want safe school buildings and grounds.

I and our volunteer Hugh Rogers asked lots of questions about grubs, the problem most often said to require pesticides. However, the first step to reducing grub numbers and their impact on grass is to build healthy soil. (Organic consultant Chip Osborne says, "Feed the soil, not the grass.") There are dozens of other, related considerations. If a lawn or field is severely depleted by years of toxic treatment, the transition may take some three years. A healthy lawn can transition in about a year. You do have to think ahead. Grub treatment should start in the summer or fall for the following season.

Some facilities managers enjoy pesticide-free culture; others find it a pain. But it is doable. It will cost somewhat more than traditional methods to start, but payback will begin in about three years. (CUSH research).

The three towns in my school region (Roxbury, Bridgewater, and Washington) have never used pesticides. The facilities manager would be happier with more irrigation and more money for grass seed, turf aeration, and so forth. But we are a jock region, extremely proud of our many Class S championships. A now-retired girls field hockey coach (Joan Gauthier) won 300 games. Our brilliant left-handed pitcher Steve Reich threw a no-hitter in his first game for Army (it was against Navy!) he was later killed in a helicopter crash trying to rescue Navy Seals in Afghanistan. Our girls softball team has usually done well. Our athletes expect to play on whatever surface is available. After all, it wasn't so long ago that baseball stars started off in sandlot games. And as we know, there's no crying in baseball.

Our volunteer and I checked in with about two dozen towns and a half dozen experienced organic lawn care experts. Most towns were mixed in their feelings about organic methods, with some of the population proud of the accomplishment and others resentful. Another

pattern that seemed to emerge is widespread agreement that support of the administration and the athletic department is essential to success. No one can keep any field in good shape if it is constantly used and never rested.

There has been considerable discussion among environmental advocates as to whether grubs are so problematic that pesticide treatment should be allowed under some circumstances. That's a little like the person who's quitting smoking saying, if I could just have one cigarette, I'll be OK. Rivers Alliance leans toward emphasizing a start-up regime rather than exemptions. Moreover, one pesticide being discussed as not harmful, Acelepryn (also called Grubex), is not suitable for use anywhere near water. Here's the warning on the website of the manufacturer, DuPont:

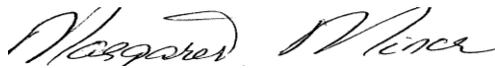
ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS

This pesticide is toxic to aquatic invertebrates, oysters and, shrimp. Do not apply directly to water. Drift and runoff may be hazardous to aquatic organisms in water adjacent to use sites.

So we do not feel that this is a safe product for use in Connecticut. It's still relatively new, and maybe it will prove to be safe. But our fisheries in the Sound and our clean water sources upland need maximum protection.

Finally, we believe that when a school, or town, or the state has applied pesticides anywhere, the description and warnings should be prominently posted to help the public understand the exposure. Little flags at ankle level aren't the right medium for the message.

Here follows a list of health sources. We would be pleased to answer questions.



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SOURCES

- 1) *Pesticide Exposure in Children: Technical Report*, American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), November 26, 2012. The Abstract is a powerful wake-up call. This report focuses mainly on effects in utero and among young children, but the range is up to 19 years of age (see for example page 1768). Also exposure of either a mother or father (adolescent or otherwise) is associated with leukemia and brain tumors; and a high metabolism can intensify exposure. The section on Integrated Pest Management (IPM) on page 1781 is quite negative. (The AAP was softer on IPM in its Policy Report.)

- 2) The NY State ban on pesticides in schools, *The Child Safe Playing Fields Act*, 2010.
Educational handout from the NY Department of Environmental Conservation.
- 3) *Potential Health Effects Related to Pesticide Use on Athletic Fields*, Robyn Gilden, Ph.D., et al, Public Health Nursing, May 2012. This is primarily a review of pesticide products in use on athletic fields. The Abstract expresses a warning that exposure of children to pesticides should be reduced. In an email exchange, Dr. Gilden pointed out pesticides can be most risky when the body is undergoing rapid change; and that commonly used pesticides on athletic fields target the reproductive and nervous systems, both changing rapidly in adolescence.
- 4) *Pesticides in the Nation's Streams and Waters, 1992-2001 – What findings may mean to human health, aquatic life, and fish-eating wildlife*, US Geological Survey, press release, March 2006. A major, widely publicized study concluding that all US streams typically contain pesticides. Note, the conclusion that most concentrations met the US standard for human health is based on averaging concentrations over a year, not on concentrations to which many are likely to be exposed (that is, concentrations during the warmer months); this is explained on page 60 ff of the report.
- 5) *Protecting Bees from Pesticides*, Dr. Kimberly Stoner, CT Agricultural Experiment Station, 2014.
- 6) *Children at Risk from Pesticides*, Lynne Peeples, Huffington Post, March 27, 2012. Fun reading about the Connecticut "issues."

7) CT DEEP WEBSITE UPDATED MARCH 2012, **Organic Lawn Care**

Your neighbors will "go green" with envy!

You can have a beautiful healthy low-maintenance lawn without conventional fertilizers and pesticides. Organic lawn care uses a whole systems approach to maintaining your lawn without toxic chemicals. Your lawn may look so good that your neighbors will want to "**go green**", too. Please share your organic lawn care experiences with us. Encourage your town officials to implement [organic land care](#) on playing fields, too.

Why is organic lawn care better?

Conventional lawn chemicals can pollute our water, harm wildlife and have adverse health effects on people and pets. Using pesticides to tackle weeds and pests can actually damage your lawn, too. They kill good organisms that help produce the nutrients plants need to grow, weakening the grass, fostering thatch, and encouraging diseases. [emphasis added]