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ALBANY CITY COUNCIL TAKES LEAD AND VOTES TO STOP PESTICIDE SPRAYING

Albany City Council Passes First Resolution Against Aerial Pesticide Spraying for the Light Brown Apple Moth in the Bay Area

Albany, CA – Citing concerns over recent aerial pesticide spraying in Monterey and Santa Cruz Counties, the Albany City Council passed a resolution opposing aerial pesticide spraying for the light brown apple moth, while advocating least-toxic pest controls. The resolution follows similar resolutions passed recently by the City of Santa Cruz, Santa Cruz County and the City of Monterey, and in advance of planned aerial pesticide spraying in the Bay Area this summer.

“We are taking steps to prevent the misuse of pesticides today, in order to protect the generations of tomorrow,” said Albany Mayor Robert Lieber. “The California Department of Food and Agriculture should place an immediate moratorium on aerial pesticide spraying until it is proven both safe and effective,” he added.

The resolution is a result of large-scale pesticide spraying that took place in Monterey and Santa Cruz Counties. The three rounds of spraying, which took place in September, October and November, have been part of the California Department of Food and Agriculture’s (CDFA) efforts to eradicate the light brown apple moth, a species that some consider a threat to agriculture. Each round involved multiple sorties of airplanes dispersing a synthetic pheromone and variety of other chemicals encased in microscopic plastic capsules. Much of the spraying took place, over densely populated areas. The spray is classified as a pesticide by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Speaking before the Council, Paul Schramski, State Director of Pesticide Watch Education Fund, called on the CDFA to listen to community concerns and take proactive steps to address them. “The California Department of Food and Agriculture has consistently ignored Californians environmental and health concerns over spraying. The agency should take greater steps to address these concerns by conducting a full Environmental Impact Report.”

Earlier this month, a coalition of environmental groups released a report citing 648 documented cases of adverse health effects. Those who complained of adverse reactions said the spray caused symptoms ranging from asthma-like attacks and difficulty breathing, to chest pains, headaches, blurred vision, swollen glands, skins rashes and feelings of chronic fatigue. Neither the CDFA,

nor the California Department of Public Health, have announced plans to fully investigate these claims.

Nan Wishner, Chair of the Albany Integrated Pest Management Task Force noted that there have been no long-term human toxicity studies of the pesticides being used, which include known carcinogens, and that the inhalation risks of the plastic capsules in which the pesticide is sprayed are unknown. She referred to the broad range of less-toxic pest controls available to CDFA. “The burden of proof is on the Department of Food and Agriculture—to prove that less-toxic pest control is not the preferred solution.” Some of the available technologies include sticky traps, pheromone dispensers and twist ties. The Department currently uses some of these least-toxic technologies in other parts of the State.

Meanwhile, legal fights against CDFA’s spraying program linger in Monterey and Santa Cruz County courts while Assemblymembers John Laird (D-Monterey) and Loni Hancock (D-El Cerrito) are considering statewide legislation to prevent future aerial pesticide spraying without greater public consent.

Several Bay Area activists are working to pass resolutions with other local governments in advance of proposed future aerial spraying this summer, while community information sessions will be taking place throughout the region.

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