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MEMORANDUM

Date: April 15, 2015
To: Board Members
From: Henry Jennings
Subject: Criteria for Issuing Variances from Chapter 29, Section 6 for Railroad Spraying

Companies spraying railroads need to obtain variances from Chapter 29, Section 6 if they wish to make broadcast applications of herbicides within 25 feet of surface water. Railroad companies have traditionally requested to apply herbicides up to 10 feet of water crossings.

Historically, the Board has granted variances for railroad spraying provided that the applicant adheres to the "MDOT model." At the May 16, 2014, meeting the Board granted a one-year variance from Chapter 29 to Asplundh Tree Expert Company—Railroad Division. However, concern was voiced at the meeting about the runoff potential for one of the herbicides listed on the application. Those present came to the realization that no one was completely sure what the "MDOT model" entailed. Consequently, the Board directed the staff to work with MDOT and other experts to develop guidelines/criteria for the issuance of railroad variances prior to next season. Robert Moosmann of MDOT has developed some draft guidelines (attached) and the staff has been researching the available railroad spraying guidelines and the products commonly used.

After considering the purpose of the requirement for which Chapter 29 variances are issued, contemplating the Board's directive, and reviewing related material, the staff came to the conclusion that the principal question relates to the inherent runoff risks related to the product choices. Based on this premise, it led the staff to two possible paths: 1) conduct comprehensive comparative aquatic risk assessments on each of the potential products, or 2) rely on EPA's assessment by way of the surface water advisory statements on the product labels. Given that the staff is currently engaged in a rather ambitious assessment of pesticide risks to marine invertebrates, the latter option appears to be the more prudent choice.

The staff has excerpted the surface water advisories (attached) from the products containing the active ingredients used on last year's projects. A rather wide diversity in the level of concern in the advisories is quickly apparent. The water quality advisories reveal there is relatively little concern for glyphosate and imazapyr products. The Dupont Oust Extra (sulfometuron methyl and metsulfuron methyl) label contains a 25 foot buffer to surface water for railroad applications thereby precluding the Board from issuing a variance for that product. Labels for products containing aminopyralid (e.g. Chaparral), aminocyclopyrachlor (e.g. Streamline) and indaziflam (e.g. Esplande) all include surface water advisories that raise concerns. The staff would like guidance from the Board on whether products with these advisories should qualify for a variance.

In addition to screening for appropriate products for variance consideration, Bob Moosmann has identified a series of criteria the Board may want to consider as requirements for issuing variances for spraying within 25 feet of surface water, such as:

- Requiring the use of products that do not contain surfactants
- Requiring inclusion of a sticker/extender (like pineolene) for which there is scientific data supporting the ability of the adjuvant to adhere the herbicides to the substrate.
- Prohibiting—consistent with some of the ground water advisories—applications when significant precipitation is forecast for the application area within 24 hours
- Considering the time of year when spraying will be conducted. MDOT discourages railroad applications in May or June as these have been very wet months in recent years.