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MEMORANDUM

Date: July 17, 2012
To: Board
From: Henry Jennings & Gary Fish
Subject: Background on the “Think First – Spray Last” Catchphrase

Public Law 1997, Chapter 389 established the state policy to minimize reliance on pesticides. Following enactment of the law, the Board reviewed and discussed the law and ideas about implementing its intent. The Board decided it was logical to target homeowner use of pesticides to promote the principles of Integrated Pest Management (IPM) because:

- Sales information indicated a sharp increase in residential pesticide use
- Licensed applicators had already received years of IPM training
- BPC surveys and anecdotal evidence indicated that homeowners give little thought to pesticide use

In developing a homeowner outreach campaign, the staff decided that the term Integrated Pest Management was too much like jargon and/or too bureaucratic to effectively market to homeowners. Consequently, they diligently worked to create a short, catchy, easy-to-remember and understand phrase that would convey the key concepts of IPM to homeowners. The result was the “Think First – Spray Last” (TF-SL) catchphrase which was later coupled with a caterpillar image to form the BPC logo. The logo was first used on refrigerator magnets and incorporated into the BPC homepage in 1998. Shortly thereafter, the staff reserved the Uniform Resource Locator (URL) of www.thinkfirstspraylast.org.

TF-SL and the caterpillar logo were promoted widely to the homeowner audience beginning somewhere around 1998. In the Master Gardener trainings that Gary conducts, he explains how growers and professional applicators have been practicing IPM for many years. Although the message was initially intended to convey IPM just to homeowners and other untrained applicators, it gradually took on the broader meaning of representing IPM in a less bureaucratic tone.

TF-SL quickly became widely popular with partner organizations promoting stewardship and sustainability principles to homeowners. It is very easy to remember, which allows homeowners to quickly find the BPC homepage. Evidence of its utility is reflected in the popularity of the BPC websites, which collectively received over 442,000 page views in the last fiscal year, 47% of the Department’s total.

In summary, the TF-SL catchphrase was developed to convey the principles of IPM to homeowners following the enactment of Public Law 1997, Chapter 389 which established the state policy to minimize reliance on pesticides. It became popular with partner organizations, was easy to remember, and gradually took on more prominence in BPC outreach efforts. The staff has not been aware of any criticism of the catchphrase until now.