



Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association

COMMON GROUND COUNTRY FAIR

October 30, 2015

Maine Board of Pesticides Control
Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry
22 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Dear Members of Maine's Board of Pesticides Control,

For more than 40 years, the Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (MOFGA) has been committed to helping farmers and gardeners grow organic food. We are the largest and oldest state organic organization in the country. Our 12,000 dues-paying members and the nearly 500 organic farmers we certify endorse MOFGA's efforts to reduce reliance on pesticides across this state. MOFGA is one of the few organizations attending every meeting of the Board of Pesticides Control.

MOFGA's Public Policy Committee has reviewed the letter from Paul Schlein (included in two recent board packets) and supports it. We are particularly concerned about the approximately 700 percent increase in pesticides used in and around homes and in public areas in Maine in the past 20 years.

We agree that as a state, we need to do more to:

- reduce dependence on these chemicals;
- significantly ramp up consumer education about pesticides;
- increase visibility of the YardScaping program;
- track and report on pesticide sales in Maine;
- reinforce the Board's statutory responsibility to minimize reliance on pesticides.

In 1997, MOFGA proposed *An Act to Reduce Reliance on Pesticides* in response to scientific developments that underscored the human and environmental risks of pesticides – developments that led, in 1996, to the passage in Congress of the *Food Quality Protection Act*. MOFGA sought to implement a five-year process to measure pesticide sales, convene stakeholders, and implement a plan to reduce pesticides use. Had the Act, as originally drafted, been passed and implemented, Maine could have achieved a 33% reduction in pesticide use by 2002. A compromise version of the proposal, entitled *An Act to Minimize Reliance on Pesticides*, was ultimately passed. The Act, although setting no definite quantitative goals for pesticide reduction, stated for the first time that it was **“the policy of the state to work to find ways to use the**

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minimum amount of pesticides needed to effectively control targeted pests in all areas of application.” (22 MRSA sec. 1471 – M, sub-7) It provided a critical first step in the process of getting control of our state’s pesticide use:

“The board (of Pesticides Control) shall implement a system of record keeping, reporting, data collection and analysis that provides information on the quantity of product and brand names of pesticides sold. The board, in cooperation with the University of Maine Cooperative Extension Service, shall study ways to improve pesticide information databases and to optimize the useful analysis of reported information.”

“No later than October 1, 1998 and each year thereafter, the board shall publish an annual pesticides report containing the quantity of product, sorted by the name and United States Environmental Protection Agency registration number, of all pesticides sold in the prior year, and the data further sorted by sector of use wherever possible.”

As you are well aware, the recordkeeping provisions were never implemented, and were ultimately repealed. We do not know to what extent agricultural pesticide sales have increased in Maine, due to the lack of published data. But, thanks to the work of the Board and Staff, we do know that use on yards has increased dramatically and continues to violate fundamental principles of integrated pest management.

The Board of Pesticides Control is the only government entity in Maine that can address this issue. Your leadership is essential and is in the best interest of Maine’s citizens.

With a guaranteed and steady source of funding for its mandate, the Board is in a unique position to be able to take action. We look forward to your response and actions on these important issues.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ted Quaday". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Ted Quaday
Executive Director

Maine Board of Pesticides Control
28 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333

October 16, 2015

Dear Board Members,

First, I must apologize for not getting my July 7, 2015, letter to you in time for proper inclusion and consideration in the Board meeting packet. I've thought about what I tried to convey to you quite a bit since then, and have a few more thoughts and ideas I would like to share with you. I am therefore resubmitting my original letter of July 7, followed by more specific suggestions.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Paul

Paul Schlein
Arrowsic, Maine

----- Forwarded message -----
From: Paul Schlein <pschlein@gmail.com>
Date: Tue, Jul 7, 2015 at 5:04 PM
Subject: Pesticide Lawn Applications
To: Henry Jennings <henry.jennings@maine.gov>

Dear Henry,

In reading through the agenda for this Friday's Board meeting, I found item number 6, the letter from Justin Nichols (http://www.maine.gov/daef/php/pesticides/documents2/bd_mtgs/jul15/Nichols_letter_to_BPC.pdf), quite disturbing. Quite honestly, it sickened me to read it, and I was left with a strong feeling of anger and frustration. Four herbicides and an insecticide applied at the same time on a single lawn? With all the clear and effective alternatives to pesticide use for lawn care and maintenance, it's unimaginable, and should be unthinkable. Whether the posting was done properly by the applicator doesn't matter in my mind. It's that these applications are occurring at all—and on how many lawns, in how many towns, every day, in Maine?

The fact that the property owner evidently had no idea what was being applied—urea, it was thought—is also very problematic. It seems that many people having their lawns treated often have complete faith that what is being applied is completely “safe,” and so they generally don't feel the need to ask questions. If they better understood the risks and possible outcomes—all the health and environmental effects—of what is being applied, they might make a different choice. I can tell you from personal experience within my own family, that education works when the facts—and alternatives—are presented in a reasonable manner. With understanding, habits can change significantly.

What I would like to suggest is to ramp up the Board's public education component to a much higher level. The successful YardScaping program needs to be broadcast everywhere, by every means available, to everyone. I would think allocating a greater percentage of the fees that are realized from the 12,000 or so pesticide products that are registered in Maine would be more than reasonable, and would be money very well spent. This

increased effort would go a long way in advancing the Board's statutory mission of reducing reliance on pesticides.

With public concerns about pesticide use increasing daily, and with more and more Maine municipalities passing ordinances restricting pesticide use, I think a more organized and centralized approach might be warranted. There's no better body or agency in Maine than the Board of Pesticides Control that can address this issue appropriately and in its entirety. Municipalities make their best efforts, but are often lacking in resources and overall knowledge to tackle all the intricacies surrounding pesticides. With all this in mind, having this topic become a top priority for the Board would not only be in the public's best interest, but could also save municipalities significant amounts of time and money in not having to address this themselves. (I can tell you that my town is considering an ordinance right now, as are many other and larger towns.)

In closing, I believe the Town of Ogunquit had the right idea in passing their ordinance, but it's only a first step. I think this needs to be taken up at the state level, by the Board and/or Legislature.

Please, if possible, include this for review and consideration under agenda item 6 in Friday's Board packet.

I will leave you with the quote that most influenced my thinking on this subject:

"I advocate the 'Freedom Lawn' approach on my property—allowing a wide diversity of perennial grasses and other herbaceous plants to dominate the lawn. I believe this is better for the overall ecology of the lawn and supportive of a greater overall biodiversity on my land. I will mow at least once every two weeks at 4", sometimes once a week during very rapid growth periods, and return the clippings back into the lawn using a mulching mower. I never water my lawn and allow nature to take its course during dry periods. I overseed fescues (both fine and turf-type) and white clover into my yard, especially those areas that are thin due to poor tolerance of the existing species to low fertility, water stress, or shade. I only apply fertilizers to newly seeded areas. Once established, they rarely ever see a fertilizer again. Compared to some of my neighbors who choose a higher management approach to their lawn areas, my lawn is very comparable to theirs in quality and aesthetic appeal. I firmly believe that low-input lawns are not necessarily low-quality."

*Karl Guillard
Professor of Agronomy
University of Connecticut*

Respectfully,
Paul

Paul Schlein
Arrowsic, Maine

10/16/15

Additional suggestions relating to my original July 7 letter:

- Bolster sustainable and low-risk programs and practices:
 - The YardScaping program, created, spearheaded, and coordinated by the BPC, in partnership with the Friends of Casco Bay, is one of the centerpieces of the Board's public education program that embodies and exemplifies a critical part of the "minimize reliance" mission. However, the program

and the demonstration gardens at the Back Cove in Portland are underfunded, understaffed, and continue on a fraying shoestring of time and money.

YardScaping is gaining in the Maine consciousness, but, to succeed, really needs to be a common noun and verb in Mainer's vocabulary. For this to happen, a significant infusion of both personnel and funding will be needed. Based on more than eight years of involvement in this program on my part, I've identified and listed below what I think are some essential things that must happen to ensure not just the continuation of the YardScaping program, but its expansion and increased awareness on the part of Mainers. Please consider the following:

- A complete review and revamping of the YardScaping website to update and expand content and redesign the site for greater functionality. Except for occasional updates, this has not been done since the site was created more than 12 years ago:
<http://www.maine.gov/dacf/php/pesticides/yardscaping/index.htm>.
 - Printing of the new YardScaping booklet, only available now in digital form:
http://www.maine.gov/dacf/php/pesticides/yardscaping/documents/New_YardScaping_Booklet.pdf.
 - Reprinting of the very popular YardScaping lawn signs. The supply was exhausted several years ago, and there's a list of people waiting to receive them:
<http://www.maine.gov/dacf/php/pesticides/yardscaping/involved.htm>.
 - Creation of an online video to further advance the educational aspects of the YardScaping Gardens at Back Cove.
- The Board's *GotPests?* website (<http://www.maine.gov/dacf/php/gotpests/index.html>), one of the best and most informative sites of its kind, is a key source of information for homeowners and professionals, and focuses on sustainable practices. While the site was entirely redesigned and redone about five years ago, it is in need of updating and regular maintenance.
- Creation of a full-time or, at a minimum, part-time position that focuses solely on public education and outreach. Responsibilities could include coordination of the YardScaping program, the YardScaping Gardens at Back Cove, and volunteer activities; maintenance of all related websites, including *GotPests?*; conducting regular, related training programs and workshops; attendance and exhibits at shows, workshops, and conferences.
 - Fund and launch a major statewide media campaign to promote sustainable lawncare and landscaping, highlighting the YardScaping program and *GotPests?* website.
 - Enhance existing BPC training and licensing modules, or create new ones, focusing on sustainable lawncare and landscaping practices and alternatives to pesticide use.
 - Convene a meeting with other state agencies and private interest groups to review the current status and implementation of Title 22, Section, 1471-X (<http://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/statutes/22/title22sec1471-X.html>), the state policy to minimize reliance on pesticides. Evaluate present activities and determine the best approaches needed to attain the required goal.