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Mark your calendar!

- You're invited to CATs' Organic Fair at Halvorsen Park in Eureka on Saturday, August 27th!

See inside for details and opportunities to participate.

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and that diazinon, also one of the chemicals in the consent decree and popular with nut growers in the Sacramento Valley, reduces testosterone in male salmon and dulls the sense of smell that leads salmon home.

The EPA passed regulations in 2004 which, in essence, allow consultation with pesticide manufacturers rather than FWS and NMFS about the effects of pesticides on endangered species. CATs confronted the EPA's illegal moves and is analyzing potential challenges to the regulations.

Defining what should be done to protect endangered species from the effects of pesticides, CATs produced an opinion paper by toxicologist Marc Lappé that has helped agencies and other environmental organizations to critique EPA actions.

Recently, CATs has outlined to the EPA the specific manner in which the agency failed to fulfill its obligations under the consent decree. CATs is currently awaiting a reply. If not satisfied with the response, CATs will officially request the court to direct the EPA to fulfill its obligations.

UPDATE: Not in anyone's backyard

A wet winter may cause the glassy-winged sharpshooter to expand into the northern state, where agriculture agencies are set to battle the vineyard pest with toxic pesticides. With forced backyard spraying imminent, some residents plan to peacefully resist the pesticide invasion. CATs contends that spraying the grounds of schools, apartments and other human environments has significant impacts and has taken this argument to the Court of Appeal. Even if successful, CATs' lawsuit may not defuse the volatile situation by summer.

UPDATE: Pesticides are not a solution

Also heading north is the West Nile virus, carried by birds and passed on to mosquitoes. While few people become infected with WNV or develop symptoms, and deaths are rare, some communities have panicked, spraying city streets and neighborhoods with toxic insecticides. Most mosquito control districts in California plan to resist this strategy. CATs is monitoring the situation and will oppose harmful pesticide use.

THE drift Spring 2005

Founded in 1982, Californians for Alternatives to Toxics is a clearinghouse for information and strategic action regarding pesticides and other hazardous chemicals and promotes alternatives to their use. CATs works to bring solutions to toxic conditions occurring in northern California with actions that benefit people here and around the world.

Permission is granted to reproduce this newsletter if Californians for Alternatives to Toxics is fully credited. No part may be copied to websites; links to the CATs website are encouraged.

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"The history of life on Earth has been a history of interaction between living things and their surroundings."

- Rachel Carson



Photo: CATs member Josh Strange inspects a healthy adult chinook salmon during research at the mouth of the Klamath River.

CATs to EPA: Do your job!

Until CATs filed suit in 2000, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) did nothing for eleven years to protect endangered species from the harmful effects of pesticides as required under the Endangered Species Act. Despite its mandate, the agency

stood idly by while hundreds of plants and animals were pushed to the brink of extinction and evidence mounted that pesticides were among the factors contributing to their demise.

Among the now endangered species are Pacific salmon, without question the most culturally and economically important wild animal on the west coast of North America. CATs' lawsuit focused specifically on seven of California's salmon and steelhead populations, whose numbers have plummeted throughout their habitat, and twenty-three woodland plants at risk from intensive herbicide spraying of public and commercial forests (see inside).

Aided by co-plaintiffs Environmental Protection Information Center and Humboldt Watershed Council, CATs settled the lawsuit in September, 2002. Judge Claudia Wilkin issued the consent decree that forced the EPA to conduct evaluations on the harmful effects of pesticides on endangered species and to initiate consultations with the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) while conducting the pesticide evaluations.

Five years after the lawsuit was filed, the last of the eighteen pesticide evaluations required by the consent decree have been released, and it has become clear how short the EPA has fallen in fulfilling its obligations.

Since the consent decree was issued, evidence of the adverse effects of pesticides on salmon and other aquatic species and their habitat has steadily increased. Yet the EPA has continued neglecting endangered species, even as the U.S. Geological Survey found scores of pesticides in salmon streams, frequently at levels the EPA considers acutely toxic to aquatic organisms.

Scientists have found that trout lose orientation in currents when exposed to 2,4-D, an herbicide used on California's northcoast by timber company Simpson/Green Diamond,

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Poison drifts to frog habitat

Research collected by the US Geological Survey since 1997 revealed dangerous levels of pesticides in the bodies of frogs and their aquatic habitat in the Sierra Nevada. Subsequent research pinpointed areas in the Central Valley from which the pesticides had drifted hundreds of miles to settle in a pristine wilderness.

When CATs requested the Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) reevaluate the pesticides' danger to the frogs, DPR refused. CATs then filed suit.

Knowing that aquatic frogs, anadromous fish such as salmon and rare forest plants are among the most sensitive organisms in the state, CATs believes that a complete examination of the effects of pesticides on the indicator species will reveal the true threat these chemicals pose to wildlife and biodiversity.

Now on appeal, this groundbreaking lawsuit seeks to force DPR to consider if pesticides may be having significant impacts at the time it renews registrations each year. CATs is awaiting the court's decision and will continue to strive for protection from the effects of pesticides.

Push for pesticide-free schools advances

Since publishing a report last summer evaluating public school compliance with state law (*Are Our Schools Flunking Out? A Mid-Term Report Card on Chemical Pest Management*), CATs has learned that more schools are now conforming to the 2000 Healthy Schools Act (HSA).

In an informal survey of school districts in Humboldt, one of the five counties in the study, CATs found that five more school districts have eliminated pesticides from their campuses, and nearly all now comply with notification and posting requirements.



Nineteen of the thirty-two Humboldt school districts currently have a no-use pesticide policy.

Building on this success, CATs is working with staff at public schools in Humboldt, Lake, Sonoma, Mendocino and Del Norte counties encouraging them to adopt strong Integrated Pest Management (IPM) policies.

IPM relies primarily on a combination of measures (such as eliminating food sources, washing surfaces and blocking entry points) to prevent and manage pest infestations. The HSA encourages schools to use least toxic pesticide treatments when pests can't be managed by more conservative methods.

CATs' immediate objective is to ensure that children are not exposed to pesticides at school and to help schools improve their compliance with the HSA. The ultimate goal, however, is to codify

least toxic methods into strong policies guaranteeing that schools continue their healthy practices into the future.

Since the report was published, seven Humboldt school boards have adopted commendable policies, while two others are nearing completion. CATs has begun surveying schools in Mendocino and Lake counties, and will soon query Del Norte and Sonoma county school districts about their progress.

Also encouraging is CATs' new IPM Mentoring Program. School maintenance managers who have successfully eliminated pesticide use have agreed to share their experiences with others, teaching how they can satisfy their campus requirements while they avoid exposing children to hazardous chemicals. Several model practitioners have agreed to serve as mentors.

One weakness of the HSA has been a lack of follow-through by the Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) in providing training to rural school maintenance staff. To address this oversight, the DPR is heading north this July to host a training session in Eureka for forty area school districts. This will teach the attendees about least toxic practices, and help exchange ideas and establish communication among maintenance staff.

An essential resource describing least toxic alternatives is the manual "IPM In Schools" published by the Bio-Integral Resource Center (510-524-2567 or www.birc.org). Additional information on the HSA can be found at the DPR's website: www.dpr.ca.gov. CATs' report on school pesticide use, the HSA, and IPM policies is available upon request in English and Spanish, and through the website.

California's Healthy Schools Act (HSA) of 2000

The law requires school districts to:

- Notify parents annually about what pesticides may be used during the upcoming year
- Provide parents the right to be notified 72 hours in advance of pesticide applications
- Post notices where pesticides are applied 24 hours before and until 72 hours after
- Keep records of pesticide use for four years and make them available upon request
- Appoint a district IPM coordinator to manage HSA compliance

Join CATs for an organic fair!

Consider yourself officially invited to northern California's first organic fair — where you'll find great music, fantastic food, and kid's activities. And the best part is — it's all organic or non-toxic!

Join us at Halvorsen Park by the waterfront in Eureka on August 27th in a benefit to help CATs continue to fight for the elimination of toxic chemicals and pesticides from our environment.

At the Organic Fair, we'll aim to deliver a great day of fun by the bay and bring you information about how to live a healthier life.

While at the Fair, check out CATs' attempt to create the world's largest organic salad (bring your own bowl), peruse the wares of natural and organic retailers, learn how to shop organic on a budget and avoid pesticides in your garden, eat great organic food and beverages, or just kick back and groove to the local and headlining musical talent.

We want to hear from you if you would like to participate in the Fair (non-profits, organic and non-toxic retailers/vendors) or volunteer to help organize, promote or work at the Fair. CATs is currently accepting applications from vendors and volunteers.

For more about the Organic Fair or to volunteer, please call 707-445-5100 or email organicfair@alternatives2toxics.org. See you there!

From the desk of the director... On a recent trip across California, the effects of herbicide spraying were starkly visible on roadsides and in vineyards, parks, front yards, empty lots and ditches. Spring's new growth had been killed and soon the orange grass would disappear and be replaced by bare ground. It doesn't have to be this way.

On the Northcoast where CATs' office is based, roadsides are 95% free of herbicides. Organic farming has become mainstream, several cities do not use pesticides and schools are increasingly pesticide-free. Obviously, plants grow more luxuriantly on the Northcoast than elsewhere in the state, so what's the difference? I'd say it's attitude mixed with a dose of reality.

We've seen that herbicide use is counterproductive, allowing only the toughest undesirable plants to grow back, thus requiring more and more spray. Poisoned bare ground isn't pretty. Chemically landscaped roadsides are not attractive. New information on the environmental and health impacts of chemical formulations such as the herbicide Roundup becomes available almost daily.

Look to CATs' website (www.alternatives2toxics.org) as we continue to build you a state-of-the-art site with news about alternatives to toxic chemicals and things you can do to avoid pesticides. We'll be posting summaries you can rely on about the impacts of using Roundup and other pesticides and news about planned pesticide use on our public lands. Don't have access to a computer? You are welcome to call or stop by. Want to contribute to the movement to get harmful poisons out of California by volunteering or making a financial donation? We look forward to hearing from you.

"If you use pesticides and you have children, stop." - Senator Barbara Boxer



CATs' Staff and Board of Directors

Back row from L-R: Julia Olson, Jason Beaver, Executive Director Patty Clary, Capp Maberry, Noelle Johnson, Matt Lang. Front row: Pete Harrison and CATs' Board President Jene McCovey. Not pictured: Board members Ramona Sokolow, Pam Richard, Judy Wartella, Perry Gray-Reneberg and Boyd Smith. Interns: Rosemary Georgeson, Emily Kirsch and Rebecca Elston.

CATs fights unprecedented USFS spray plans

CATs is vigorously opposing U.S. Forest Service (USFS) proposals for the most extreme forest herbicide applications California has seen in more than two decades, with approximately 32,000 acres at stake in three national forests.

The largest proposal is for the Cottonwood fire area of the Tahoe National Forest, where 13,500 acres of young trees need a "boost," according to agency representatives. Photographs submitted to USFS by CATs contradict this claim, showing healthy forest recovery at dozens of priority herbicide spray sites.

Tahoe NF has not sprayed herbicides since 1983 when lawsuits threatened by CATs brought a halt to USFS spraying statewide for several years.

The Cottonwood project has been at the forefront for CATs since 1998. Once planned for 21,000 acres, its size was reduced due to pressure from CATs and local residents. CATs successfully sued regarding the environmental analysis and the project was halted in 2001 by Judge Lawrence K. Karlton. The latest proposal is currently on appeal to the USFS.

Helicopter spraying is planned for more than a thousand of the 10,000 acres in the Larson herbicide project, with the remainder slated for backpack spraying. One chemical proposed for use is the surfactant R-11 which, due to its ability to mimic the hormone estrogen, is of particular concern for health and environmental effects.

Located in the Stanislaus National Forest, where more herbicides are used each year than on all other California public forests combined, the Larson project is presented as a way to speed up forest recovery after a catastrophic fire.

In another ill-founded attempt to control nature, Modoc National Forest wants to apply herbicides on 8,500 acres, including one 6,000-acre site,

to eradicate noxious weeds that have spread as a result of harmful forest practices. Weed experts have described many viable non-herbicide treatments, yet Modoc managers are ignoring integrated non-toxic methods. Modoc NF has also managed its land without herbicides since the mid-1980s.

CATs has discovered that the pesticide borax has become common in USFS projects without the necessary risk analysis or evaluation of alternatives. Applied to freshly cut stumps, borax is a sodium compound which is extremely toxic to non-targeted vegetation. It remains active in soils for a

year or longer and poses health concerns. CATs is arguing against the use of this toxic chemical, shown by some studies to be ineffective.

With land management agencies again turning to

herbicides as a quick fix "silver bullet" solution to control vegetation and kill spreading noxious weeds, even Yosemite National Park is not safe. A plan that may lead to herbicide spraying in the park is open to public involvement. See the website for CATs' comments.

In contrast to the situation for public lands, pesticide use data for commercial forests is more difficult to access. Spray plans are rarely known in advance and state regulatory agencies are less involved in the environmental outcome. These factors combine to make public participation tenuous at best.

Timber companies disregard forest and watershed health by liberally applying herbicides for "conifer release", killing undesired competitive vegetation to grow monoculture tree farm forests.

With aerial spraying by timber companies not currently a factor, CATs' efforts continue to be focused on getting timber companies off the "herbicide treadmill" altogether.

Top Counties, Forest Pesticides

Tuolumne County	89,333 lbs
Siskiyou County	65,427 lbs
Humboldt County	51,474 lbs
Shasta County	44,100 lbs
Butte County	24,446 lbs
Lassen County	22,786 lbs
Mendocino County	15,277 lbs

Source: CA DPR 2003 Pesticide Use Reports for California public and commercial forests