



SUMMARY REPORT

Agenda Date: 1/6/2026

To: Sonoma County Board of Supervisors, Sonoma County Water Agency Board of Directors, Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District Board of Directors, Community Development Commission Board of Commissioners

Department or Agency Name(s): Permit Sonoma, Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District, Community Development Commission, Sonoma County Public Infrastructure, Regional Parks, Agriculture/Weights & Measures, and Sonoma County Water Agency

Staff Name and Phone Number: Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District, Catherine Iantosca (565-7262); Community Development Commission, Marc Chandler (565-7524); Regional Parks, Hattie Brown (565-3220); Sonoma County Water Agency, Kevin Booker (521-1865); Sonoma Public Infrastructure, Greg Chiossi (565-7579) and Mike Volatile; Permit Sonoma, Alisa Keenan (565-2518); and Agriculture/Weights & Measures, Sue Ostrom (565-3836)

Vote Requirement: Informational Only

Supervisory District(s): Countywide

Title:

Annual Countywide Landscape Management Report Fiscal Year 24/25

Recommended Action:

Accept the Countywide Annual Landscape Management Report Fiscal Year 24/25

Executive Summary:

On June 4, 2019, the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors, the Board of Directors of the Sonoma County Water Agency (Sonoma Water), the Board of Directors of the Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District (Ag + Open Space), and the Board of Commissioners of the Sonoma County Community Development Commission (CDC) passed concurrent Resolution No. 19-0246, establishing pest management policies and prohibiting the use of synthetic pesticides, including herbicides, insecticides, and fungicides in sensitive areas. Among the goals of Resolution No. 19-0246 were to reduce human contact with synthetic herbicides, insecticides, and fungicides through the reduction of application and use in public spaces and to have a publicly available list of “no synthetic spray” zones to enhance transparency and accountability. Resolution No. 19-0246 directed Permit Sonoma staff to prepare an annual report on the pesticide use of the four agencies.

Pursuant to Resolution No. 19-0246, Regional Parks, Sonoma County Public Infrastructure, Permit Sonoma, Agriculture/Weights & Measures, Sonoma Water, Ag + Open Space, and the CDC are providing this annual report for the 24/25 fiscal year.

Discussion:

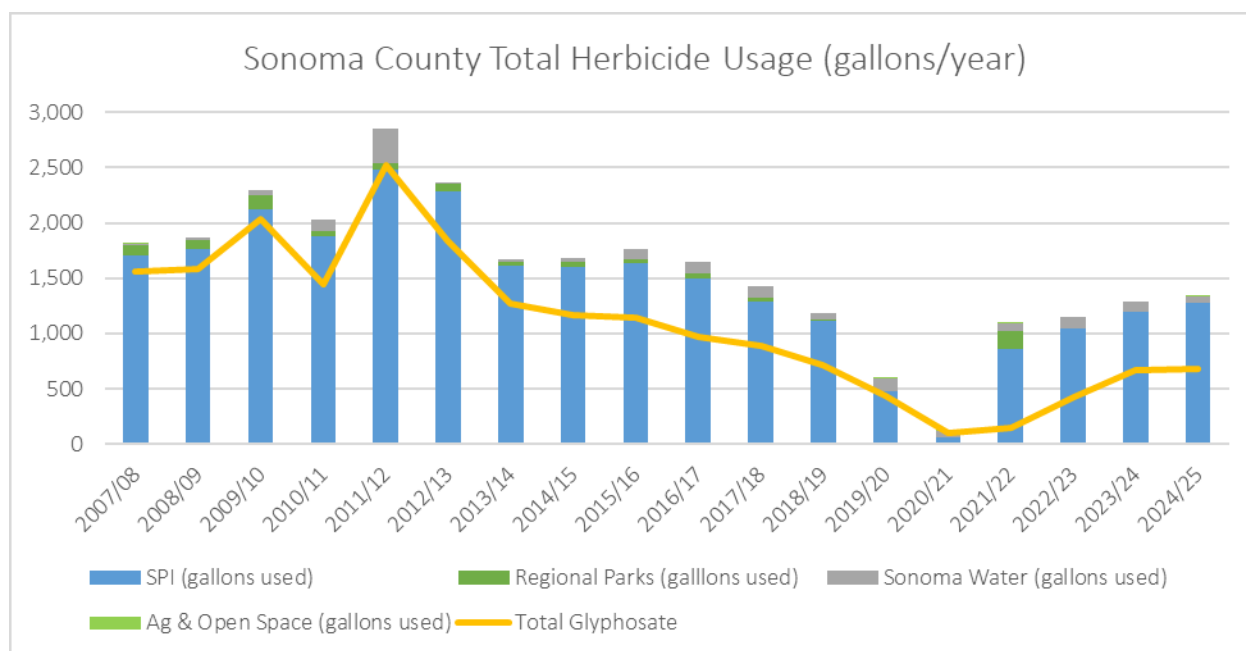
2024/2025 Vegetation Management Summary

Since the adoption of Resolution No. 19-0246 in June 2019, the use of herbicides, including glyphosate, by Sonoma County Regional Parks, Sonoma Water, Ag + Open Space, and the Community Development Commission has decreased compared to pre-adoption volumes. Reducing herbicide use can mitigate the risk

of adverse impacts on public and environmental health. Improper application practices, such as overuse and over spraying, can contaminate water and soil and harm non-target species, while direct contact can cause a variety of adverse human health effects. Some research has linked Glyphosate, in particular, to serious health issues such as lymphoma cancers. The reduction in herbicide use is primarily due to the development and implementation of Integrated Pest Management (IPM) plans and related policies, prioritization of the use of physical, biological, and mechanical controls over the use of chemical controls, and the establishment of a policy that using chemicals for vegetation management should be implemented on a limited basis and when no other alternative is deemed feasible.

Rainfall also plays a significant role in vegetation management needs. Rainy seasons with high rain fall will result in more vegetation removal needs, including the need to use herbicides for effective removal. Lower rainfall and drought years will generally require less vegetation management. Additionally, short, intense rain events can also result in rapid and repetitive vegetation growth, keeping soils saturated for longer periods of time, resulting in frequent revegetation.

In FY24/25, overall herbicide use rose slightly from the prior year but remains well below levels of usage in earlier periods. Similarly, the overall use of Glyphosate increased just slightly in FY24/25 (682 gallons) but the total volume is still lower than prior to Resolution No. 19-0246 being adopted (719 gallons in 2018/2019).



Total Glyphosate use since adopting IPM practices countywide:

2018/2019 = 719 gallons

2019/2020 = 438 gallons

2020/2021 = 98 gallons

2021/2022 = 150 gallons

2022/2023 = 427 gallons

2023/2024 = 670 gallons

2024/2025 = 682 gallons

Of the 682 gallons applied in 2024/2025, 640 gallons were applied by SPI, in response to increased vegetation resulting from the heavy rainfall delivered during the 2024-2025 winter season.

While IPM practices and related policies have reduced the overall use of herbicides, the use of herbicides continues to be a necessary practice, even on a limited and reduced basis. The amount of herbicide use will continue to vary year-to-year and between departments. Total rainfall will continue to play a primary factor on the need for herbicide use and account for future fluctuations.

Ag + Open Space

Ag + Open Space is committed to avoiding the use of synthetic pesticides in sensitive areas, and to support this commitment has compiled all known information regarding sensitive species and habitats that occur on its properties. Ag + Open Space implements an integrated approach in which synthetic pesticides are used conservatively and only as necessary, and will not use a synthetic pesticide unless: 1) there is no other option available to control an extreme infestation; 2) the environmental benefit is clear, and outweighs the negative impacts of continued weed infestation; 3) only licensed professionals are involved in the application; 4) there is minimal risk of harmful exposure to humans or to sensitive resources; and 5) the application is part of an intentional strategy to transition over time to alternative methods of invasive species control such as mechanical removal, grazing, or prescribed burning.

In FY 24/25, Ag + Open Space used a total of 0.71 gallons of herbicide, none of which was glyphosate.

Community Development Commission

In addition to measures that ensure safe and sanitary housing, the CDC is responsible for weed and other fire abatement measures. CDC contracts with property management companies for landscape services. When practical, manual controls such as mowing and debris removal are employed.

The CDC is committed to the responsible good stewardship of agency owned and managed properties while working to ensure it meets the obligations of providing safe and sanitary housing, employing best practices at commercial properties, and effectively mitigating weeds and other pest and fire hazards. CDC is fully engaged with vendors in monitoring their pesticide and herbicide use on CDC owned properties and in using the most suitable organic alternatives available and to further work on prevention measures to avoid issues from arising.

The CDC reports no herbicide use in FY 24/25.

Regional Parks

Regional Parks is committed to reducing the risk of toxin exposure for both people and pets that use the parks. Regional Parks uses a range of techniques to manage vegetation including grazing, prescribed fire, mowing, weed whacking, and construction of shaded fuel breaks, as well as pesticides when necessary. Regional Parks is committed to eliminating the use of synthetic pesticides for routine, ongoing maintenance to control invasive weeds. Regional Parks maintains the use of synthetic pesticides to treat and control specific, targeted pest invasions when other means of control are inadequate. All pesticide use is reported to the California Department of Pesticide Regulation through the Sonoma County Department of Agriculture/ Weights &

Measures. Regional Parks has decreased the use of pesticides over the last 10 years. Use of all pesticides, including glyphosate, are extremely low, while the acres of land Regional Parks owns and operates is at an all-time high.

In FY 24/25, Regional Parks used a total of 1.39 gallons of herbicide, of which 0.77 gallons was glyphosate.

Sonoma Water

Sonoma Water is responsible for maintaining buildings and facilities for water supply, flood control, and sanitation across Sonoma County. In addition, Sonoma Water manages approximately 75 miles of engineered flood control channels and 100 miles of modified or natural channels for flood water conveyance and habitat enhancement. Sonoma Water uses a range of methods to meet its ongoing flood management requirements, as well as safely maintaining vegetation around its various facilities, while also meeting multiple objectives such as resource protection and environmental sustainability. These methods include sediment removal, bank stabilization, and various vegetation management activities such as hand and mechanical removal, grazing, and prescribed burning. Sonoma Water uses the minimum amount of herbicide necessary to control invasive plant species that are problematic for its water supply, wastewater, and flood control facilities. Sonoma Water uses a blended outlook within the stream maintenance program. Herbicides are used only when necessary, and will not be used unless: a) there is no other reasonable option available; b) the environmental benefit is clear; c) only licensed professionals are involved in the application; d) there is minimal risk of harmful exposure to sensitive receptors; and e) the application is part of an overall strategy to reduce herbicide usage over time and to seek out alternative methods of invasive species control such as animal grazing.

In FY 24/25, Sonoma Water used a total of 67 gallons of herbicide , 41 gallons of which were glyphosate.

Sonoma County Public Infrastructure

The Sonoma County Campus is maintained by Sonoma County Public Infrastructure. Within areas of responsibility of the County campus and other County facilities (formerly the General Services Department), there are no landscape management responsibilities by County staff involving the use of pesticides or herbicides. Through its contracts with outsourced landscape contractors, SPI does ensure that firms comply with County policy regarding chemical use on County properties.

With regards to the 1,368 miles of roadway, refuse sites, road yards, and the airport property that SPI manages, it utilizes mechanical control of vegetation as much as possible and avoids the use of synthetic herbicides in sensitive areas and makes herbicide applications in a manner that minimizes risk to human health and the environment. In fiscal year 2024/2025 the Department used only glyphosate and triclopyr registered for aquatic and terrestrial use as post-emergent herbicides, even though applicators do not spray into water.

In FY 24/25, SPI used a total of 1,271 gallons of herbicide of which 640 gallons were glyphosate.

Strategic Plan:

N/A

Racial Equity:

Was this item identified as an opportunity to apply the Racial Equity Toolkit?

No

N/A

Prior Board Actions:

The Board has received the vegetation management report annually since 2018/19. 12/10/2024 The Board received the 2023/24 vegetation management annual report.

12/12/2023 The Board received the 2022/23 vegetation management annual report.

12/06/2022 The Board received the 2021/22 vegetation management annual report.

12/16/2021 The Board received the 2020/21 vegetation management annual report.

12/15/2020: The Board approved the 2019/20 vegetation management annual report.

04/07/2020: The Board approved the 2018/19 vegetation management annual report.

01/14/2020: The Board approved the submitted maps of the designated “No Synthetic Spray” Zones.

06/04/2019: The Board approved by Resolution No. 19-0246 adopting countywide policies on pesticide use and reporting.

FISCAL SUMMARY

Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:

N/A

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):

N/A

Attachments:

24/25 Annual Vegetation Management Report

Related Items “On File” with the Clerk of the Board:

N/A