



## Legislation Text

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**File #:** 2021-1296, **Version:** 1

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**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, Department of Transportation and Public Works, Regional Parks, Agriculture/Weights & Measures, General Services, and Sonoma County Water Agency, Regional Parks

**Staff Name and Phone Number:** Sonoma County Water Agency Kevin Booker (521-1865) Regional Parks Hattie Brown (565-3220) Permit Sonoma John Mack (565-1900) Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District Sheri Emerson (565-7358) Community Development Commission Marc Chandler (565-7564) Department of Transportation and Public Works Greg Chiossi (565-2231) Agriculture/Weights & Measures Sue Ostrom (565-3836) General Services Mike Volatile (565-1957)

**Vote Requirement:** Majority

**Supervisory District(s):** Countywide

**Title:**

Annual Countywide Landscape Management Report FY 20/21

**Recommended Action:**

Accept the Countywide Annual Landscape Management Report FY 20/21

**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 #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 #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 #19-0246 directed Permit Sonoma staff to prepare an annual report on the pesticide use of the four agencies.

Pursuant to Resolution #19-0246, Regional Parks, Transportation and Public Works, General Services, Permit Sonoma, Agriculture/Weights & Measures, Sonoma Water, Ag + Open Space, and the CDC are providing this annual report for the 2020/2021 fiscal year.

**Discussion:**

2020/2021 Vegetation Management Summary

Since the adoption of Resolution #19-0246 in June 2019, use of herbicides, including glyphosate, has decreased significantly. This is primarily due to the development and implementation of Integrated Pest

Management (IPM) plans, emphasizing the use of physical, biological, and mechanical controls over the use of chemical controls and establishing a policy that using chemicals for vegetation management should be implemented on a limited basis and when no other alternative is deemed feasible.

Prior to the adoption of Resolution #19-0246, herbicide use by the four agencies totaled 1,184 gallons (2018/2019 fiscal year). During the 2019/2020 fiscal year, herbicide use was 596 gallons, nearly half of the use to the year prior. This reporting period, herbicide use is 120 gallons, nearly an 80% reduction.

While the agencies have worked diligently to implement IPM practices and reduce 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 and agencies. The reported use for Fiscal Year 2020/2021 is abnormally low due to COVID -19 restrictions and drought conditions. Staff expect higher use levels as COVID-19 restrictions are lifted and in high rain fall years.

#### 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.

#### 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. In certain cases, vendors used Round-Up, which was limited to small areas around the Russell Avenue property.

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.

#### Department of Transportation and Public Works

The Transportation and Public Works Department does not have general landscape management responsibilities as to County assets. The Department does manage 1,368 miles of roadway, refuse sites, road yards, and airport property, and as to those facilities, the Department utilizes mechanical control of vegetation as much as possible. When synthetic herbicides are used, sensitive areas are avoided and all applications are done in a manner that minimizes risk to the public, staff, and the environment. The Department manages vegetation using Integrated Vegetation Management, a decision-making and action process that uses the most

appropriate vegetation management methods and strategy, along with monitoring and evaluation to achieve maintenance program goals and objectives in an environmentally and economically sound manner. Roadside vegetation is managed for a variety of purposes, including fire prevention, maintaining road surface integrity and roadside drainage, preventing the spread of noxious weeds throughout the County, and most importantly for safety of the traveling public to maintain clear sightlines so motorists can see signs, other vehicles, bicycles, and roadside hazards. The Department policy is to comply with local, State, and Federal regulations, which includes pesticide reporting, pesticide training, and utilizing licensed professionals.

#### 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.

#### 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.

#### **Prior Board Actions:**

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 #19-0246 adopting countywide policies on pesticide use and reporting.

#### **FISCAL SUMMARY**

Expenditures	FY 21-22 Adopted	FY22-23 Projected	FY 23-24 Projected
Budgeted Expenses			
Additional Appropriation Requested			
<b>Total Expenditures</b>			
<b>Funding Sources</b>			
General Fund/WA GF			
State/Federal			
Fees/Other			
Use of Fund Balance			
Contingencies			
<b>Total Sources</b>			

**Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:**

None

Staffing Impacts:			
Position Title (Payroll Classification)	Monthly Salary Range (A-I Step)	Additions (Number)	Deletions (Number)

**Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):**

None

**Attachments:**

20/21 Annual Vegetation Management Report

**Related Items "On File" with the Clerk of the Board:**

None