

August 24, 2015

Bijan Sartipi
District Director
Caltrans District 4
111 Grand Avenue
Oakland, CA 94612

Re: Broadcast Spraying with Herbicides in San Mateo County

Dear Mr. Sartipi,

We are writing to you as farmers and ranchers in San Mateo County to request that Caltrans cease broadcast spraying of herbicides along the State Highways in San Mateo County. We strongly support mowing, brushing, and other non-toxic methods to maintain the roadsides along the State Highways in our rural areas.

The herbicides currently used by Caltrans in its spraying program in San Mateo County are Milestone, EsplAnade, and Matrix. Many of us are certified organic farmers. Our livelihood depends upon maintaining our organic certification. We have concerns about potential injury by these chemicals to our livestock, crops, and apiaries, either from spray drift or leaching through soil.

Our farms and ranches also depend upon creek and stream water for livestock and crop irrigation. These chemicals can persist in soils and be carried from roadside ditches into creeks where they can impact all downstream water users, including native wildlife.

In 2012, the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors terminated broadcast spraying along County-maintained roads except for limited use in specific situations such as yellow star thistle. The County's reasons included potential impacts on health of residents and visitors, health of the County's streams and watersheds, and protection of wildlife species, particularly endangered species.

Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District, which manages over 60,000 acres of land in San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties, has a well-established program of maintenance brushing of vegetation along roads and trails within the District's Open Space Preserves; many Preserves are adjacent to State Highways. This program includes mechanical mowing with spot applications of herbicides only for invasive control or cut stump treatment of woody vegetation. MidPen's lands provide habitat for 160 sensitive plant and animal species and their program is at the heart of the District's Mission.

In 2014, broadcast herbicide spraying was replaced with mowing along State Route 27 in Topanga Canyon in Los Angeles County. Mowing has also been in place as an effective alternative in District 1 (Del Norte, Humboldt, Mendocino and Lake Counties) for several years.

We commend all of these decisions to reduce herbicide use and urge that Caltrans adopt a similar mowing program for the State Highways in San Mateo County.

Sincerely,

Doniga Markegard, Markegard Family Grass-Fed

Larry Jacobs and Sandra Belin, Jacobs Farm

Jered Lawson and Nancy Vail, Pie Ranch

Bill Laven, Potrero Nuevo Farm

Jayne Battey, Miramar Farms

Dede Boies, Root Down Farm

John Vars, Fifth Crow Farm

Charana Binford, Rancho Alegre

Robert Kinnare, Vida Verde

Amy Wilkins, Echo Valley Farm

Todd Parsons, State Street Honey

Erin Tormey, Irish Ridge Ranch

Ryan Casey and Maggie Aaronson, Blue House Farm

Donna Richeson, Double Dog Ranch

ShaeLynn and Kevin Watt, Early Bird Ranch

Kathy Webster, TomKat Ranch Educational Foundation/LeftCoast GrassFed

Stephanie Jennings and Paul Pfluke, Green Oaks Creek Farm