



Santa Clara Valley Chapter

September 10, 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,

On behalf of the Santa Clara Valley Chapter of California Native Plant Society which includes major portions of San Mateo County, I am writing to support the request by Committee for Green Foothills, Loma Prieta Chapter of Sierra Club, Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District, Peninsula Open Space Trust, South Skyline Association, and others, that Caltrans terminate its current practice of broadcast spraying with herbicides along State Routes 1, 35, 84, and 92, 280 and 101 in San Mateo County, and to control weeds by mowing and/or replacing weeds with California native plants.

We strongly support best practices to control weeds, improve visibility, and improve fire safety along our highways. To best carry out these goals while protecting the environment, we strongly support sustainable solutions including mechanical mowing and brushing of vegetation and other non-toxic approaches, with spot application of herbicides only where absolutely necessary.

In 2012, the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors ceased broadcast spraying of herbicides along some 300 miles of County-maintained roads. The County's reasons included concerns regarding impacts on the health of residents and visitors, health of the County's sensitive habitats including native plants, wetlands, streams, riparian corridors and watersheds, and protection of wildlife species, particularly endangered species. The County is using a best management practice of only using herbicides for particularly difficult to control invasives and in topographically challenging areas.

There is also an additional issue concerning the long-term use of herbicides. The repetitive use of herbicides as a method of vegetation control ultimately results in the

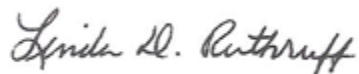
creation of “super weeds” that become resistant to the herbicide resulting in a cycle of needing stronger and stronger chemicals to produce the result. This magnifies the potential for harm to humans, native plants, and the entire ecosystem.

Midpeninsula Regional Open Space controls vegetation along its trails and roadways utilizing mechanical mowing and brushing, with spot application of herbicides only for invasive vegetation control or cut stump treatment of woody vegetation. District lands provide habitat for 160 sensitive plant and animal species.

In 2013, the Topanga Canyon Boulevard partners announced a landmark agreement with Caltrans to use mowers and other mechanical tools instead of herbicides, to remove brush and other vegetation along State Route 27 in Topanga Canyon.

We commend these decisions to implement sustainable solutions that promote public safety for all users of the highways while protecting the natural environment, including our native plants. We urge Caltrans to implement a similar program in San Mateo County.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Linda Q. Ruthruff".

Linda Ruthruff
Chair, Conservation Committee
California Native Plant Society
Santa Clara Valley Chapter