



Vida Verde Nature Education

Educational Equity in the Outdoors

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Dear Mr. Sartipi,

On behalf of Vida Verde, an educational nonprofit that provides free, overnight, educational learning experiences for students who otherwise would not have these opportunities, we are writing to request that Caltrans cease the practice of broadcast spraying of herbicides along State Highways in San Mateo County. Vida Verde brings inner city kids from throughout the San Francisco Bay Area to the San Mateo coastside, where they experience three days and nights of farm and nature education. We know from stories of young adults throughout the country that a nature experience through programs such as Vida Verde provides can literally be life changing for these young people. We want to ensure that our 10-year old visitors have the healthiest possible environment, including eliminating any exposure to pesticides. We therefore strongly urge Caltrans to cease broadcast spraying of herbicides along Highways 1, 35, 84, 92, 280, and 101, and use mowing instead.

Vida Verde is grateful to the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors, which terminated broadcast spraying of herbicides along County-maintained roads back in 2012. The County's reasons for eliminating broadcast spraying (except for particularly noxious weeds in limited situations) included potential impacts on health of residents and visitors, health of the County's sensitive habitats including wetlands, streams, and watersheds, and protection of wildlife species, particularly endangered species."

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

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

We commend all of these efforts to reduce pesticide use to the absolute minimum necessary, and urge that Caltrans adopt a similar mowing program for the State Highways in San Mateo County.

Sincerely,

Sean Sears and Laura Sears, Co-Founders
Vida Verde

