

County of Santa Clara



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County Launches Innovative Pest Management Program Ed Levin Park Creates “Pesticide-Free” Areas

SAN JOSE, CALIF.—The County of Santa Clara is implementing an innovative new program at Ed Levin County Park that uses Integrated Pest Management (IPM). Integrated Pest Management is a decision-making process for managing pests by combining cultural practices, mechanical and physical tools, and biological control to minimize pesticide usage. IPM relies on scientifically sound pest management programs that have proven track records of significantly reducing risks related to pesticides, while improving the quality and health of the environment.

“The use of highly-toxic pesticides to eliminate weeds and insects is prevalent in our society,” said Supervisor Liz Kniss, Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors. “Re-educating the public about the imbalance in this cost/benefit equation is extremely important. I am committed to making sure we protect public health and the environment where we live. I am proud of Santa Clara County's move to set an example for other bay area parks.”

Ed Levin Park is the first of 27 County parks to employ the new strategy. The 1,539-acre park has a 19-mile trail system and is a popular place for hiking, cycling, horseback riding, picnicking, fishing, and hang gliding. Ed Levin Park will serve as a model for phasing in IPM techniques and will be monitored and evaluated for effectiveness.

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Last May, environmentalists hailed the adoption of the Santa Clara County Integrated Pest Management and Pesticide Use Ordinance NS-517.70, spearheaded by Kniss. The Ed Levin Park project is an important milestone in the program.

“A growing body of literature demonstrates that the health hazards and environmental threats of pesticides are not just theoretical,” said Dr. Cindy Russell, Chair of Pesticide Alternatives of Santa Clara County. “We are routinely exposed to pesticide residues that contaminate indoor air and persist in soil and landscaping vegetation outdoors.”

The wealth of knowledge about pesticides used in the California environment is due largely to voter passage of The Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Act of 1986 (Prop. 65). As a result of Prop. 65, the State of California EPA publishes annually a list of chemicals known to cause cancer or reproductive toxicity. These substances have been screened and are no longer used by the County.

“The parks in Santa Clara County are the pride of many residents and visitors,” said Lisa Killough, Director of the Parks and Recreation Department. “Ed Levin Park is just the start of a more ecologically balanced approach of pest management in our County parks.”

During the IPM program phase-in period, the County is screening pesticide products and ingredients to develop an approved list of least-toxic pesticides. These pesticides have minimal impact on human health and the environment when they are applied at the appropriate times and locations for optimal results.

“The more we know about the pest, the easier it will be to manage it without a reliance on pesticides,” said Naresh Duggal, Integrated Pest Management Coordinator for the County of Santa Clara. “Together, we can reach an informed consensus based on both science and common sense to protect our health, our safety and our environment.”

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