

# Chicago Park District's PESP Strategy

## **Describe your Organization's Five-Year Goals Related to Pesticide Risk Reduction**

In five years, the Chicago Park District wants to deal with pest control problems in as environmentally responsible a manner as possible. We want to use less-persistent pesticides and less pesticides overall. We want to increase use of permanent cultural pest controls. We want to increase our reliance upon a wide variety of new and innovative chemical pest control strategies. We also want to increase our reliance upon a wide array of beneficial pest control organisms.

We do not expect to eliminate pests or the use of pesticides. However, we do expect to keep pest species at a negligible level via the use of least-damaging control methods. This becomes easier as new control methods are made available. It also becomes easier as real world experimentation differentiates between effective and ineffective means of pest control.

## **What do you envision doing (broadly) to try to resolve your major issues?**

Broadly, the Chicago Park District plans to continue taking advantage of new pest control measures as they become available. As environmentally-friendly products are proven effective, they are more widely used and more affordable. Many practical, acceptable solutions are already available for the major pest control issues facing our organization.

The pest insect, microbe and weed species we are dealing with are tenacious, but commonplace. Methods and products exist to deal with them. Sustainability of our system becomes less of an issue as it is implemented. For example, beneficial insects establish and reproduce in environments where fewer pesticides are present. Furthermore, pest insects, microbes and plants are less likely to form resistance to pesticides that are not overused.

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## **Goal 1 and Tactics**

The Chicago Park District will use less-persistent pesticides. We will stop the use of dangerous-to-handle, overly persistent pesticides. Organophosphates, carbamates and old-line pyrethroids are almost completely eliminated from Park District use. We have ceased purchasing these products, and are steadily eliminating old stockpiles of such material. More than once, we have taken advantage of Illinois Department of Agriculture *Clean Sweep* pesticide drop-offs to jettison old pesticide inventories. This eliminates a very real risk of accidental exposure to and discharge of old chemicals. The less pesticide used, or held indefinitely in storage, the less opportunity there is for mishaps to occur.

One way in which EPA can assist us in this endeavor is by implementing a year-round urban based pesticide disposal network accessible to large growers.

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## **Goal 2 and Tactics**

The Chicago Park District will use less pesticide overall. We have stopped our reliance on routine calendar-based *preventive* pesticide applications. We have adopted a just-in-time, but still effective, application schedule. Additionally, localized spot applications of pesticides are utilized whenever possible. This replaces wholesale spraying of large areas and crops. Pesticides are applied only where and when necessary. Pest populations, while not disappearing, have not consequently *exploded*.

EPA can assist us in these endeavors by approving more reduced re-entry and no re-entry interval pesticides. Also, more spot application friendly products, such as lures and traps, pesticide-spikes and time-release granules. These products assist our staff in quickly responding to pest issues as they are discovered.

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## **Goal 3 and Tactics**

The Chicago Park District will increase use of pest control measures that utilize environmentally friendly strategies. These include permanent cultural control methods, such as physical barriers. Weed cloth and weed-suppressive mulches reduce the need for herbicides in our parks. Insect screening drastically lowers the number of pest insects in our production greenhouses. Automated heat and shade will also reduce pest pressure in our greenhouses.

Other alternative methods include use of non-systemic physical pesticides such as acids, oils and soaps; hormonal and pheromonal pesticides such as insect growth regulators and sex lures; and microbial pesticides derived from bacteria, fungi and viruses.

EPA can assist us in this goal by streamlining the approval process for new and innovative pesticides, such as thrips lures.

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## **Goal 4 and Tactics**

The Chicago Park District will further increase use of a wide assortment of beneficial pest control organisms in a variety of crop settings, both indoors and out. Currently, we utilize various predatory lady beetles, true bugs and lacewings; parasitoid wasps against

aphids, mealybugs, scales, whiteflies, caterpillars and cockroaches; and predatory mites and nematodes.

EPA can assist us in this goal by funding research into discovering, mass-rearing and applying suitable biological agents. We can measure the success of these goals by the establishment of thriving and reproducing beneficial insect populations, and by measurable reductions in the numbers of target pests. Other markers include a reduced reliance on older technology pesticides, lower dollar amounts spent on pesticides, and less staff and patron exposure and after-exposure to pesticides.