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Re: Home Rule Petitions to Reduce Pesticide Use

February 20, 2024

The Massachusetts Chapter of the Sierra Club has long supported efforts to reduce pesticide exposure at the state and local levels.

Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 132B Section 5A requires the state “to reduce or eliminate, whenever possible, human or environmental exposures to chemical pesticides”, but this section has not been implemented in any measureable way since its passage in 2000.

For example, the Chapter has supported “An Act Empowering Towns And Cities To Protect Residents And The Environment From Harmful Pesticides” since its introduction. As this bill has not been passed, many cities and towns have recently initiated home rule petitions in order to have some local control over pesticide use in their communities. In particular, Cape communities must be vigilant in protecting its sole-source aquifer. The water supplies on the Cape are already threatened by multiple human sources of toxic chemicals, and pesticides should not be contributing to this ongoing contamination.

We commend the town of Orleans for leading efforts on managing outdoor, non-agricultural use of pesticides. Sierra Club research on Massachusetts data reveals that this application class, which is largely cosmetic, accounts for about 80% of all pesticide use by weight.

The Massachusetts Sierra Club strongly endorses the “Home Rule Petition for a Pesticide Reduction Bylaw” passed by Orleans Town Meeting in 2023 and similar action by other communities.

Respectfully,

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