



Friends of Casco Bay
Casco BAYKEEPER

October 12, 2017

Councilor Spencer Thibodeau, Chair
Councilor Jill Duson
Councilor Brenda Ray
Transportation and Sustainability Committee
Portland City Council

Dear Councilors Thibodeau, Duson, and Ray,

Friends of Casco Bay supports the Pesticide Use Ordinance drafted by the Sustainability & Transportation Committee. We have long been concerned about the possible impacts of lawn chemicals—pesticides and fertilizers—on the environmental health of Casco Bay. Our monitoring efforts reveal that the lawn chemicals we are putting on yards can end up in the Bay (see map attached). Between 2001 and 2009, we collected rain water flowing into the Bay and analyzed the samples for a suite of pesticides. Lab results identified 9 different pesticides in 14 locations all around the Bay. With this information, we were able to state that pesticides are picked up and transported by stormwater flowing into our coastal waters where they do not belong. Sampling by the Maine Board of Pesticides Control in recent years shows that pesticides continue to enter our coastal waters.

We also raise a number of issues for you to consider as you work to finalize this ordinance:

- **While we are pleased to see a 75-foot setback from a water body or wetland for any pesticide application, we would prefer to see that distance increased to 250 feet.**
- **We would have preferred that the ordinance eliminate the application of all pesticides, whether synthetic or organic, because a pesticide, by definition, is a product *designed to kill*.** However, we will support any ordinance that helps prevent lawn chemicals from entering the Bay.
- **Education with enforcement is essential.** We have been educating the public about this issue for 20 years; clearly, education alone has not been not enough. We urge you to consider a stronger enforcement provision in this ordinance.
- **A blanket exemption for spraying for invasive or dangerous insects is too broad.** This activity should be one that requires a waiver.
- **The ordinance should restrict pesticide use on golf courses to the greens only.** The South Portland ordinance allows pesticides to be used only on the most critical areas of play. Since the Riverside Golf Course abuts the Presumpscot River, you can be assured that stormwater runoff will deliver pesticides directly to this important habitat and, ultimately, to Casco Bay.
- **We urge restricting applications on rights-of-way.** Many of these areas are used for recreation, so restrictions on spraying rights-of-way are essential to protect public and environmental health.
- **Fertilizers must be next.** Pesticides are only half the problem. We have long been concerned about the impacts to the Bay from excess nitrogen, a major component of fertilizers. We urge the City to begin work on crafting an ordinance to prohibit or limit the use of high-nitrogen fertilizers, including weed and feed products. Algal outbreaks are fueled in part by excess nitrogen in stormwater runoff, and we have been having a record number of shellfish closures in Casco Bay due to the presence of nuisance and harmful algal blooms.

Thank you for your service to our community.

Sincerely,

Cathy L Ramsdell
Executive Director
Friends of Casco Bay

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