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COALITION OF MOMS, SPORTFISHING ADVOCATES, HEALTH & ENVIRONMENTAL GROUPS ASK GOVERNOR TO STOP PROCESS LAUNCHED YESTERDAY THAT SEEKS ADVANCE APPROVAL OF FUTURE STATEWIDE PESTICIDE SPRAYING

Twenty-five Groups Appeal to Governor and State Agriculture Agency to Develop Safer Alternative Approach to Pests Based on Current Science & Health Research

San Francisco -- Twenty-five health and environmental groups urged California Governor Jerry Brown today to halt the costly California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) process that would ratify the state's outdated methods of controlling invasive pests, which rely on toxic chemicals that pose a risk to human and environmental health and wide-area quarantines that can be devastating to farmers.

The letter comes in response to yesterday's launch, by the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA), of the statewide Pest Programmatic Environmental Impact Report (Pest PEIR) process. The PEIR seeks blanket approval to use toxic treatments on short notice for unknown future pests, anywhere in the state. CDFA announced yesterday a fast-track schedule of five public meetings starting in less than two weeks and all taking place within a week, immediately after the July 4 holiday, on the controversial PEIR.

The groups opposing the PEIR cite its estimated \$3 - \$4.5 million initial cost; the fact that all meaningful public input would be foreclosed once the PEIR is approved, making it impossible for communities to stop future spray programs like the recent light brown apple moth aerial spray program; the likelihood of costly litigation to challenge the PEIR; and the fact that the "quarantine and spray" approach to pests around which the PEIR is structured is outdated, toxic, and does not work.

The letter asks the state to take advantage of current cutting-edge research at the University of California, Davis on minimally toxic pest management and policies based on the most up-to-date science. In addition, the groups ask the state to base all pest management decisions on current research on health and environmental impacts of pesticides. It does not make sense to undertake an environmental impact report that would result in approval of the state's pest management programs until the state modernizes those programs to make them more effective, less toxic, and more acceptable to the public.

"Pesticides are associated with a long list of serious health disorders, and children are particularly vulnerable because of their small size, rapidly developing bodies, and behaviors that increase their exposure," said Barbara Sobel, of MOMS Advocating Sustainability (MAS). "The pesticides CDFA has published for evaluation in the PEIR cause serious health effects from miscarriage and birth defects to delayed puberty and impacts on reproductive hormones. It is time for the California Department of Food and Agriculture to make protecting children's health a priority and to reform its approach to invasive species management."

"CDFA's approach to this PEIR places the affected public in an untenable position," said attorney Keith Wagner, a partner in the environmental law firm Lippe Gaffney Wagner LLP. "CDFA is asserting that this environmental review document will cover all future pesticide spray programs, known or unknown. This means that if the public has any concern about any potential activity that might possibly be carried out under the PEIR, the public must sue within 30 days of CDFA's approval of its program, or possibly lose the right to challenge future spray programs when their actual details can be known. Put simply, CDFA's insistence on proceeding as described increases, not decreases, the likelihood that CDFA will face legal challenge."

"The broad array of public interest groups who have appealed to the governor to stop the PEIR recognize that the solution to 30 years of repeated state 'eradication' programs for the same 9 pests is to reform how the state approaches invasive species, not to lock in the current failed, toxic approach for decades to come," said Nan Wishner of the California Environmental Health Initiative (CEHI). "The list of chemicals CDFA has given to its consultant to evaluate in the PEIR indicate that, although the agency is saying that the PEIR will use 'the latest science and technology,' it is in fact based on the business-as-usual 'quarantine and spray' approach."

"Even tiny amounts of pesticides can cause serious health risks. Some can cause long-term problems for children," stated Caroline Cox, Research Director for the Center for Environmental Health. "State programs should be based on sound scientific evaluations of the actual risks posed by introduced species and should recognize that it is

unsustainable to use repeated chemical treatments in neighborhoods and on food,” Cox added.

“Our coalition of groups is asking the governor to turn CDFA’s planning in the direction of decreasing the toxic burden on human health and the environment from pesticides,” said Paul Towers, State Director of Pesticide Watch. “At the same time, we are proposing an alternative that supports CDFA in meeting its statutory mandate to truly protect California agriculture, but without imposing punishing quarantines and mandated chemical treatments on farmers,” Towers added.

“Pesticides continue to poison some of California’s most threatened wildlife,” stated Jonathan Evans of the Center for Biological Diversity. “California has better solutions than business-as-usual pesticide application, to minimize the toxic legacy in our environment.”

About Center for Environmental Health: CEH has a fifteen-year track record of protecting communities from the health impacts of toxic pollution and has previously uncovered lead and other toxic health threats to children and families from dozens of products and from environmental pollution. CEH also works with major industries and leaders in green business to promote healthier alternatives to toxic products and practices. www.keh.org

About MOMS Advocating Sustainability: MAS is a group of mothers and families committed to creating healthy communities for children by reducing the use of household and environmental toxins. www.momasunite.org

About Pesticide Watch: Since 1991, Pesticide Watch Education Fund has worked side-by-side with Californians to prevent pesticide exposure, promote local farming and build healthier communities. www.pesticidewatch.org

About the California Environmental Health Initiative: the California Environmental Health Initiative works to bring citizen advocacy and scientific research to expanding awareness that protecting human and environmental health must be the first priority in all food and agricultural decisions. www.cal-ehi.org

About the Center for Biological Diversity: the Center for Biological Diversity is a national, nonprofit conservation organization with more than 320,000 members and online activists dedicated to the protection of endangered species and wild places. www.biologicaldiversity.org

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