



Bill Would Put Burden of Proof on EPA

Rep. Allen Boyd wants to require a scientific basis to justify any pesticide bans

Just after a slew of environmental groups chastised the EPA for going easy on farmers and pesticide manufacturers, U.S. Rep. Allen Boyd, D-Monticello, began pushing a bill that would force the environmental agency to use "sound science" to justify any pesticide bans.

"There are some situations where the EPA, to meet deadlines, is making assumptions that don't have a basis in science," Boyd said. "This clarifies the process."

The bill would amend the 1996 Food Quality Protection Act, which requires the Environmental Protection Agency to set limits on the amount of pesticide residue in food. Under the act, the EPA must begin assessing pesticide residues by August and may ban or limit the use of some pest-control chemicals.

Pesticide bans and limits could hurt Florida farmers, particularly tomato growers, if no other pest-control methods are available or effective, Boyd said. Without the pesticides, Florida farmers would be unable to compete with produce imports from Mexico, where environmental controls are lax.

"The agency doesn't believe that the FQPA needs amendments at this time," EPA spokeswoman Ellen Kramer said Wednesday. "We believe we are making

our decisions based on sound science."

Kramer stressed that EPA has not had a chance to review the legislation and declined further comment.

With the introduction of Boyd's bill, the EPA came under attack from both sides. On Tuesday, environmentalists and consumer advocates serving on the federal government's food quality advisory committee quit after accusing the EPA of delaying action and kowtowing to agribusiness and chemical companies.

In a letter to the executive director of the National Campaign for Pesticide Policy Reform, EPA acting deputy administrator Peter D. Robertson defended the agency.

"Making sure that EPA's risk-reduction actions are based on sound science is the most important step we can all take to guarantee that the FQPA's promise of protection for our children and the American public is actually fulfilled," Robertson wrote. "We, too, wish that this process could be faster."

The new bill would not change the standards set out in the Food Quality Protection Act, Boyd said. But it would force EPA to prove cause and effect. If the bill passes, the EPA would not be allowed to ban or limit the use of a pesticide if it made any non-scientific "assumptions" in concluding that the chemical leaves toxic residue in food.

The bill would prohibit the EPA from basing a pesticide ban on computations or modeling results that use "worst-case" sce-

narios or on any information about an alleged adverse effect if it is "anecdotal, unverified or scientifically implausible."

The legislation also would delay any bans if alternative pest control methods are unavailable, and would allow farmers to use the pesticide during emergency outbreaks of pests.

CREDIT: DONNA LEINWAND

THE TALLAHASSEE DEMOCRAT, 4/30/99

Florida Pesticide Review Council Meets in March

Doug Abbuhl, president of the Coastal Plains GCSEA attended the March 5 Pesticide Review Council meeting in Tallahassee to represent the FGCSA. The following excerpts are taken from the minutes of that meeting and may be of interest to our members.

Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS)

Dr. Marion Fuller, Director of Food Safety for FDACS reported on the recently released Consumer Union Report, "Do You Know What Food You're Eating?" While the report tried to identify foods with higher pesticide residues, the Toxicity Index is based on USDA residue data and factoring in subjective parameters. It is inappropriate to take a single serving and compare that to a chronic index or reference dose. The index had no peer review and most toxicologists frown on using this venue for proposing a methodology for risk assessment. The FQPA has had a profound effect on our product registration system. There are more emergency exemption registrations and a slowdown in new products coming in as the agency shifts to cover FQPA responsibilities.

Ground Water Issues

Dr. Dennis Howard, newly appointed chief of the Bureau of Pesticides, discussed a large field study that is in the resulting measuring stage. A number of the field studies were done to determine the potential for various products to leach under reasonable worst-case scenarios. A Florida-

FQPA Participation Critical

Allen James, executive director of Responsible Industry for a Safe Environment, says now is the time to keep up the pressure on Congress. Grassroots response has slowed down the process, but EPA has not been swayed from their course of faulty risk assessment.

Joel Jackson, FGCSA director of communications will prepare a letter to your representative and senators for your signature on your club's letterhead stationery. Just send three sheets of your club's letterhead stationery and a self-addressed stamped envelope to Joel Jackson, FQPA, 6780 Tamarind Circle, Orlando FL, 32819. The letters will be returned to you for your signature and mailing to your legislators to keep the pressure on EPA to use good science and common sense in enacting the law.



specific field study was done in the Palatka area to test for aldicarb (Temik) in potable wells. The initial data shows no significant aldicarb in the wells in this area of the state. Dr. Howard mentioned the groundwater study done in Dade County looking for synthetic pesticides used by the golf course industry. Arsenic was found at elevated levels in the soils and shallow groundwater in wells situated at the water table, but concentrations approached background levels in deeper wells. The final reports from DACS and DERM should be available in the near future.

Lake Wales Ridge Monitoring Network

The focus of this project is to evaluate the occurrence of pesticides and nitrates in the vicinity of the water table in the unconfined surficial aquifer system throughout the Lake Wales Ridge and Polk and Highlands counties. This area was selected for the low organic matter content in the very clean, well-drained sands that exist in this area and for the potential for contamination from the agricultural use of the land.

Surface Water Projects in South Dade and St. Lucie Estuary

Seven detections of endosulfan in excess of water quality criteria for fishable, swimmable waters prompted an inter-agency meeting to determine an integrated approach to the problem. The method will be non-regulatory and includes an education and outreach component, an advisory committee made up of representatives of the industry and regulatory communities and incentive projects to encourage changes in agricultural practices which will protect surface water. The areas of concern were the C-111 and C-111E canals which drain bean and tomato fields. SFWMD has continued to monitor these canals and no further exceedances of water quality criteria have occurred. Furthermore, concentrations of endosulfan and endosulfan sulfate detected below WQC have been reduced significantly. (Ed Note: BMP's do work!)

Pesticide Usage Survey

Florida is required by Section 487.16, Florida Statutes to conduct a Pesticide Usage Survey every three years. The new

report in tabular format supersedes the old practice of Random Sample Surveys and is based on the number of pesticides applied, number of applications, rates, and total pounds of active ingredient.

The survey was used for the top 29 major crops in Florida. The reports are based on questionnaires sent to the growers by the USDA. A nationwide uniform procedure along with statistical validity is

used by the USDA to estimate pesticide use information. Comparisons can be made with other states because of a uniform methodology by USDA. This format appears to have more value than the old Random Sample Surveys.

Department of Health

DOH officials were caught unaware when the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

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released a press release citing that the cause of death of the pelicans dying around Lake Apopka was exposure to chlorinated pesticides. The federal agency issued health advisories in their press release. However, they have not released any of the data that their advisory is based upon.

Editor's Note: *These issues have potential to spill over into all commodity groups using pesticides. It is essential that you maintain proper records and comply with all safety rules and regulations so that worst-case scenarios will not dictate how the golf industry will be regulated.*

SWFWMD Working Group Targets Nitrate Pollution

The Nitrate Remediation Working Group of the SWFWMD held a public forum called "Seeking Solutions for Springs and River Pollution" at St. Leo College in May.

The group contends that homeowners,

agriculture and the green industry, including golf, is contributing a significant amount of nitrates to the springs and river systems from the Suwanee River south to Tampa.

Compelling presentations were made documenting the rise in nitrate concentrations in water samples and the interconnection of sinkholes, underground rivers, and the springs, although it must be noted that the nitrate levels were not yet above health warning levels. However the graph of the nitrate levels is on an upward trend which is growing steeper over time. The working group wanted to tackle the problem before it became more severe and invited all interested parties to the meeting.

Erica Santella, vice president of the FTGA and one of her territory managers from TruGreen-Chemlawn represented the lawn care industry. Paul Illgen of the Glen Lakes G&CC in Weeki Wachee and I represented the golf industry. Tim Hiers from Colliers Reserve in Naples made a

presentation on IPM and good stewardship in general.

Kyle Champion of the SWFWMD summed up the concerns of the Nitrate Remediation Working Group with his study of the origins of the nitrates in springs discharge. Champion stated that between 1991 and 1998, 14 sources of nitrate were investigated (see sidebar).

Champion claims that using a nitrogen isotope test, they have determined that the dominant form of nitrogen present is from inorganic sources. IFAS sources I queried were not aware of such an isotope test that could make that distinction. Champion went on to state that of the seven major spring groups, four were affected by residential/golf course fertilization, two are affected by historical grove fertilization, and one by pasture fertilization.

While those statements may seem pointed, the tenor of the meeting was inclusive and not accusatory. The SWFWMD was seeking cooperation to solve a problem, not pointing fingers to castigate.



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One interesting presentation which illustrated the complexity of the problem on a regional basis was made by Jim

Nitrate Sources

- 1) organic decay
- 2) rainfall
- 3) residential turf/landscaping fertilization
- 4) golf course turf fertilization
- 5) sewage effluent disposal via WWTP's (?)
- 6) land disposal of sewage sludge
- 7) effluent from septic tanks
- 8) land disposal of septage sludge
- 9) row crops
- 10) citrus grove fertilization
- 11) pasture fertilization
- 12) poultry
- 13) dairies (feedlots)
- 14) open range cattle and horses

Stevenson of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection. Stevenson's focus was on the famed Ichetucknee Springs northwest of Gainesville. Mysterious periods of turbidity made scientists wonder about the underground connections of springs to other bodies of water.

Stevenson's research showed an ancient river course that once flowed from Alligator Lake in Lake City to the present Ichetucknee springs and river. Remnants of the old river course are now fed by a few local creeks and sinkholes which indeed are still connected to the Ichetucknee Springs. Stevenson placed dye in Rose Sink six miles north of the springs and several hours later the dye showed up in the springs. The problem - the creeks and sinkholes in the area receive stormwater runoff from urban and agricultural areas in the basin.

The Solution

The SWFWMD is seeking collaboration among concerned citizen groups, local governments, IFAS and industry to

address the problem before it gets out of hand. Some ways to reduce and prevent nitrate contamination: better engineering and design of residential stormwater retention systems; good stewardship in agriculture and pasture management to prevent organic wastes from moving into the creeks and sink holes; implementation of best management practices for lawn and golf course fertilization including the use of slow release and liquid fertilizers.

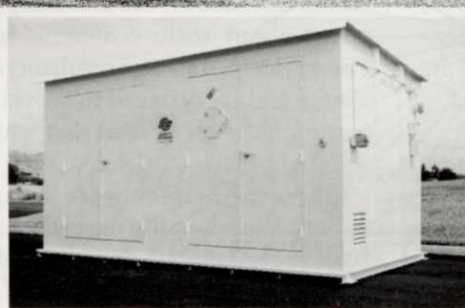
Santella and Illgen have volunteered to serve on the Nitrate Remediation Working Group to represent the turf and golf industries in future discussions.

Water quality is and will be a growing concern as development pushes farther into the pristine wilderness. You can reasonably expect this kind of emphasis to spread to other water management districts. Be prepared to offer your time and expertise in dealing with these issues in your area.

JOEL JACKSON

Director of Communications

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