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BAR HARBOR TIMES, Bar Harbor, Maine, Thurs., Aug. 1, 1985

Pesticide Use On MDI Wide And Varied

Editor's Note: Over the past few weeks, several people have contacted the Bar Harbor Times to express their concern over spraying of pesticides on Mt. Desert Island. The Times investigated these reports as well as pesticide use in general on the island. The following report summarizes the findings of the investigation and the thoughts of those knowledgeable about the effects of pesticides on the environment.

Pesticides, which include both insecticides and herbicides, are used by government agencies, towns, businesses, and individuals on Mt. Desert Island.

The biggest single user of pesticides on MDI is the Maine Department of Transportation (DOT). For visibility and safety purposes, DOT controls the height of grass and brush along state roads through a program of combined mowing and spraying. Wilbur Saunders of the Ellsworth DOT office said that grass is mowed along the banks in a six-to-12-ft. swath. Beyond that, and within the swath, small seedling sprouts such as poplars, pines, and maples are sprayed in a pinpoint, spot-spraying operation once a year. The department uses both Carlon 4, a concentrate containing 61.6 percent triclopyr, and Banvel 4WS containing 48.2 percent dicamba. Both chemicals are diluted at one quart to 100 gallons of water.

"We add ingredients to create droplets rather than mist and to increase adhesion to the plant, also," explained Saunders.

None of the towns on Mt. Desert Island reports spraying on a regular basis. Gretchen Strong, Tremont town manager, said that the town sprayed a herbicide last year on a small area where the Bernard road leaves Rte. 102. The purpose was to keep the grass from breaking up the blacktop, said Strong.

Southwest Harbor reported using injections for Dutch elm disease. Dick Plante, Bar Harbor town manager, said the town does not use pesticides at all.

Mt. Desert town manager William Cox said that for the past two years the

town sprayed annually for insects including web worms, mealy bugs, and aphids on oaks near the Northeast Harbor marina. Birches along the woods and trees in "tree islands" in the town office parking lot have been sprayed, also.

Louis Tooley of Northeast Tree Service in Camden did the second spraying job just last month and said that he used Malathion.

Cox explained that the trees that were sprayed had no leaves two years ago.

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pesticides

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"The tree service company said that we would have to spray two years or we would never get rid of it (the insects)," said Cox.

On a regular basis the only insecticides used by Acadia National Park are Dryone and Cuprinol. They are applied inside the Carroll Farm buildings in Southwest Harbor to control carpenter ants. The park is required to get approval from the National Park Service pest coordinator in Washington, D.C., before using any insecticides, said resource manager Norman Fletcher.

Fletcher said that the park also plans a one-time spraying for web worm later this year at the Wild Gardens of Acadia. The park will probably use the insecticide Sevin on selected plants, said Fletcher.

Private pesticide companies are required to report all spraying jobs to the board of pesticide control in Augusta. Bob Batteese of the board said that from these reports he is aware that several companies in the Bangor and Camden areas do spraying jobs on MDI. Motels, restaurants, and homes

regularly receive spraying for carpenter ants, he said, and some individuals and businesses have their lawns and trees treated with both insecticides and herbicides.

A spokesman for the Abalene Pest Control Service in Bangor said that 90 percent of his jobs on MDI are for carpenter ants. He does spray jobs on MDI once a month, he said.

The Maine Helicopter Service recently sprayed about 20 acres of spruce fir for spruce budworm on MDI with BT. BT is considered one of the safest insecticides because it is a bacteria rather than a chemical, and it is not passed on to succeeding generations.

The apparent widespread use of chemical pesticides on Mt. Desert Island has gotten some people worried. One person who does not hesitate to speak out against the primary use of pesticides, as opposed to mechanical or biological means to control unwanted insects or weeds, is Stan Grierson, faculty associate at College of the Atlantic (COA).

Grierson feels that people on MDI, like those in other parts of the country, have succumbed to advertising and

economic pressures. They have bought and used sprays when they really didn't need them, he says. And in countless ways they have unconsciously upset the system of ecological checks and balances creating a need for pest control.

But there are other people who feel that the careful, thoughtful, and restrictive use of pesticides will not cause environmental damage on MDI. William Drury is a COA faculty member, and was a member of a federal government pesticide control committee under the Kennedy administration. Drury says that pesticides can be thought of as medicine. The proper medicine taken in the proper amount is supposed to cure the disease and not kill the patient. The wrong medicine, or even the right medicine taken in uncontrolled amounts, might very well kill the host.

Grierson explained that people have created the need for insecticides by upsetting the bird-insect predator relationship. "Manufacturers like to sell bird feeders and bird seed," said Grierson. "People buy bird feeders. Then the birds eat the seed instead of insects.

"The same effect comes from destroying swallow habitats," he said. "People pull out old snags or destroy old barns where swallows like to nest. Then the swallows leave or nest where people

feel they need to destroy the nests. A swallow family would eat 6,000 insects daily," he remarked. With so many undevoured insects around, people turn to insecticides, he said.

Grierson feels that Maine law is not strict enough on pesticide control. He would like to see a local watchdog organization of citizens set up to oversee not only the use of pesticides, but also wetland regulation and zoning.

He said that the long-range effect of pesticide chemicals can be disastrous. "Even a tiny amount of Sevin is deadly to crustaceans (lobsters, crabs, shrimp)," he said.

Carroll Schell, chief of resource management at Acadia National Park, agrees that people often turn to chemical control of pests without trying other methods or just waiting to see if nature will take care of the problem itself. "Sometimes a super abundance of

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insects in an area is just a freak of nature," he said. "If you wait a year, the insects may be gone." He said insects stripped some vegetation at the park a few years back. "We didn't do anything and figured we might lose the plants. But the next year the insects were gone and the plants were fine," he recalled.

The park usually tries mechanical or biological means of control first, he said, such as clipping affected branches. "We once used Louisiana hot sauce to prevent deer browsing on some particular vegetation," he said. "It was pretty effective."

Drury says that the problems we face now with pesticide use and overuse are small compared to what the country faced in the '60s. DDT and products containing chlorinated hydrocarbons are now banned for use in this country, although they are still manufactured here and shipped to Third World countries. "Malathion, which breaks down chemically in 48 to 72 hours, was used to wean people off DDT and similar products," he said. "Now we need to watch Malathion." Although it is considered a non-virulent pesticide, Malathion must be applied very carefully, especially in areas near water bodies.

The warning on the Malathion container reads: "This product is toxic to fish, shrimps, ponds, tidal marshes, and estuaries. Do not apply where runoff is likely to occur."

Sevin is known to inhibit embryo development in bees, and very small amounts can be disastrous to crustaceans. A few years ago the

lobsters in a lobster pound on Verona Island were destroyed when Sevin was accidentally introduced.

Drury feels that pesticides now on the market are generally safe "if people think seriously and use small amounts in a specific way. Careless overspraying is what we have to worry about," he said.

All those familiar with pesticides agree that the subject is technically very complex. The increase in the technology of pesticides has

outstripped the rate at which applicators can be trained to use them, said one authority. And small amounts of insecticides and herbicides are available to the general public, who uses them with no training at all, other than the directions printed on the container.

To carry the analogy of pesticides to medicine one step further, people can purchase these products in the same way that over-the-counter drugs are purchased. But unlike non-prescription drugs, even some of the strongest of

pesticides are available over the counter.

Mt. Desert Island generally enjoys a low level of pesticide usage compared to agricultural areas. However, because of our abundance of water bodies, our aquatic wildlife is particularly susceptible to damage.

"The greatest need is probably for each government agency, municipality, business, and individual to think twice before using chemical pesticides," said Grierson. "There are alternatives, including doing nothing at all."

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— Diana Abrell

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B. Wolf — ~~NA~~

good, otherwise
we will cancel
their permit &
they will have have
16 days to get their
god damn highway,
spray & all, off of
our land.

(seriously, tell them
no spray & they cut
the brush.) *Joe*

STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

TRANSPORTATION BUILDING
STATE HOUSE STATION 16 AUGUSTA, MAINE

04333

mdot

DANA F. CONNORS
Commissioner

Rec'd 1/30/85

January 28, 1985

AS
Mr. Carroll J. Schell
Resource Management Specialist
Acadia National Park
Box 177
Bar Harbor, ME 04609

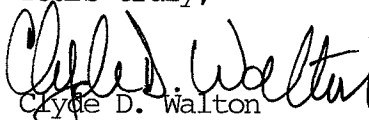
Dear Mr. Schell:

As a follow up to our recent conversation of 1/25/85, I suggest you may want to consider an arrangement whereby MDOT does not spray any herbicides in the park, but continues its current mowing activities while your organization controls the brush between the mowing strip and R/W line. You would cut any brush up to 6 feet high that is not consistent with highway safety and scenic quality within the park. Any brush over 6 feet high, we would be responsible for. Essentially, this is the operating policy for our no-spray agreements. We would be very happy to meet with you in our Ellsworth office to discuss this further with you.

With regard to replacing the burned 4-5' Red Pines on our highway project to screen your parking area, I have contacted our project resident, Jim Warren. He is going to discuss the price of 8 additional trees with his area engineer and contractor. I will contact you as soon as I hear from Jim.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Yours truly,


Clyde D. Walton
Landscape Architect

CDW:ew

ROUTING AND TRANSMITTAL SLIP

Date

2/1/85

TO: (Name, office symbol, room number,
building, Agency/Post)

Initials

Date

Joe
Norm Fletcher

RJA 2/1

3.

4.

5.

Action	File	Note and Return
Approval	For Clearance	Per Conversation
As Requested	For Correction	Prepare Reply
Circulate	For Your Information	See Me
Comment	Investigate	Signature
Coordination	Justify	

REMARKS

For your info. We're NOT
getting the Park into maintaining
DOT's right-of-way. We're just
+ing to get them to stop spraying.
We'll keep you posted.

BACK PLEASE

DO NOT use this form as a RECORD of approvals, concurrences, disposals,
clearances, and similar actions

FROM: (Name, org. symbol, Agency/Post)

Room No.—Bldg.

Canoll

Phone No.

5041-102

OPTIONAL FORM 41 (Rev. 7-76)
Prescribed by GSA
FPMR (41 CFR) 101-11.206