

# The Safe Public Places Act

## *A Rationale for an Integrated Pest Management Policy for Oregon's State Agencies*

### **Oregon's leadership in environmental health policies and practices**

Oregon has a history of leadership and innovation for advancing widespread adoption of the effective toxic reduction programs that protect the environment and public health. Examples of recent programmatic action that specifically address pesticides or potentially place pesticides under the mantle of toxic reduction strategies include:

- 2000 - [Pesticide Stewardship Partnership](#), a joint DEQ-ODA program to [identify potential problems](#) and improve water quality associated with pesticide use around Oregon;
- 2011 - [Water Quality Standards based on fish consumption rates](#), reduce chemical pollutants at the source and to protect Oregonians who eat fish and shellfish from Oregon's rivers, lakes, and estuaries;
- 2011 - [Toxics Reduction Strategies](#) to protect Oregonians from the impacts of toxic pollutants;
- 2011 – [Pesticide Management Plan for Water Quality Protection](#) to plan monitoring, identification, vulnerability assessments, communications and voluntary strategies;
- 2012 - [School Integrated Pest Management Policy \(ORS 634.700 –634.750\)](#) for Oregon public and private schools (K-12), a highly effective program to protect school children and staff from exposure to pesticides and reduce overall quantities of pesticides used in the environment.
- 2012 – Governor Kitzhaber's Executive Order 12-05: [Fostering Environmentally-Friendly Purchasing and Production Design](#) to encourage the use of materials that are benign by design and more sustainable throughout their life cycle, and to avoid the use of toxic chemicals (Executive Order 12-05 does not reference pesticides per se).

### **Summary of Problem**

In 1991 Oregon became one of the first states to protect the public by using safer alternatives to toxic pesticides on public property. That bill was nullified in 2001. It's time to bring this law back, strengthen it and be accountable to toxic reduction principles.

Pesticides are a public and environmental health problem, linked to tragic disease and environmental damage. That's why, in 2009, Oregon adopted a law to reduce toxic pesticides at all Oregon schools by using the industry standard: Integrated Pest Management, or IPM. The State of Oregon should do the same for all public places to protect workers and the public. If the schools can do it to protect children and teachers, so can state agencies to protect workers and the public.

The proposed State IPM policy applies only to public property, not to private land. It requires the State to use discretion when managing pests such as insects and weeds by considering non-toxic methods first, using pesticides only when necessary, and choosing the least toxic product to get the job done when pesticides are needed.

Establishing a policy that reduces the amount of toxic pesticides on public property will improve worker safety and public health protections. In addition, applying the principles of IPM keeps thousands of gallons of chemical runoff from contaminating Oregon's rivers, soils, and air. It's the responsible option for our citizens, our wildlife and our water.

## History

In 1991, Oregon was an early adopter of [Integrated Pest Management](#) (IPM), a proven method of managing pests while reducing reliance on pesticides. The law required state agencies to convene an Integrated Pest Management Coordinating Committee; ten years later, the State IPM program was abolished. (Sections 8-11 of [Chapter 413 Oregon Laws 2001](#)). This resulted in the absence of a coordinated policy for public government institutions, despite the implementation of definitions and programs aimed at schools and the private sector. Currently, the State *does not* set policy, establish guidelines, coordinate or implement pesticide reduction strategies for state agencies on public property as a minimum standard of practice; this is despite the considerable money, monitoring, staff resources and communication efforts directed at protecting water, organisms and people from pesticide exposure.

After Oregon abandoned its State IPM policy, the United States Department of Agriculture expanded IPM at the federal level with the [USDA's 2004 National Road Map for Integrated Pest Management](#), and with the [USDA Regional IPM Centers Information System](#). In fact, Oregon State University is the site for the [National Pesticide Information Center](#), a clearinghouse for science-based information related to pesticides and pest management. Oregon's official State IPM Coordinator is Dr. Paul Jepson, a faculty member at OSU.

The [US EPA has reported](#) that IPM programs successfully reduce pests and are economically cost-effective. The Agency confirms:

*"Integrated pest management, when viewed by traditional economics, often results in lower costs than conventional pest management. If other costs, for which dollar signs are not readily available, are considered, then the balance shifts further towards IPM."<sup>1</sup>*

## Solution

It is widely recognized that prevention measures targeting pollutants at the source are less expensive and more effective and efficient than monitoring, remediating or cleaning up pollutants after they enter the environment.

The legislative concept directs the state to require state agencies to adopt model Integrated Pest Management definitions and policies reflecting present-day evidence for the benefits of least toxic methodologies. Efficiency and effectiveness will be improved by:

- Coordinating agency efforts for the management of public property – state parks, state buildings, state highway rights-of-way and state forests.

- Setting goals to reduce reliance on pesticides in favor on least toxic alternatives and prevention and suppression strategies;
- Harmonizing existing statutes and programs aimed at reducing toxics in the environment;
- Offering IPM training for state employees involved in maintenance duties.

The State of Oregon can take a reasonable next step to demonstrate consistency about toxics reduction by, at a minimum, meeting the same pesticide reduction standards that are required at public and private schools (K-12) and for protecting the public's water resources. IPM is a way to achieve the Governor's Environmentally Friendly Purchasing Executive Order, as well as water quality and the Interagency Toxics Reduction Strategies established by the Oregon Environmental Quality Commission. It is complimentary and necessary to all toxics reduction programs.

Guaranteeing protection from pesticide exposures at public facilities is also a matter of environmental justice for the most vulnerable Oregonians. Although the evidence on social inequalities and environmental risk is fragmented, it indicates that inequalities are a major challenge for environmental health policies. Inequalities in exposure to environmental threats have been identified for vulnerable groups who may tend to visit public buildings and outdoor facilities more often, such as children and elderly people, low-education households, unemployed persons, and diverse cultural and ethnic groups.<sup>ii</sup>

Passing legislation to reinstate State IPM policy and coordination activities is a scientific and proactive strategy to ensure safe public places for all Oregonians, and to earn the public's trust. An action that reduces priority pollutants and meets multiple environmental goals results in greater environmental gain for the cost of implementation.

**The intent of the 2013 Safe Public Places - State IPM legislative concept is to:**

1. Increase agency effectiveness and efficiency when complying with Oregon's mandatory and voluntary toxics reduction and health protection strategies;
2. Create safer and healthier state worker environments;
3. Establish a state goal of reducing pesticides on or at public facilities to protect visitors, occupants and state employees;
4. Safeguard natural resources by minimizing risks from pesticide loading to air, water, land, wildlife and to protect public drinking water resources;
5. Direct the State IPM Coordinator (currently, a funded position at Oregon State University) to lead semi-annual meetings of the Interagency Integrated Pest Management Coordinating Committee to develop IPM model strategies for state-owned and leased properties;
6. Update the statutory definition of State Agency IPM to match Oregon's 2011 School IPM law ORS 634.700 –634.750 for the purpose of statutory consistency;
7. Establish a hierarchy of pest prevention strategies that opts for chemical application as a last resort and that allows only those pesticides with reduced risk or low environmental impact, and/or are necessary for the purpose of mitigating a declared pest emergency;
8. Create two permanent public representative positions on the Interagency Integrated Pest Management Coordinating Committee reserved for environmental protection and human health advocates.

**General Definitions:**

- Integrated Pest Management

...a pest management strategy that focuses on long-term prevention or suppression of pest problems through a combination of techniques such as monitoring for pest presence and establishing treatment threshold levels, using non-chemical practices to make the habitat less conducive to pest development, improving sanitation, and employing mechanical and physical controls. Pesticides that pose the least possible hazard and are effective in a manner that minimizes risks to people, property, and the environment, are used only after careful monitoring indicates they are needed according to pre-established guidelines and treatment thresholds.

---

<sup>i</sup> US EPA. "IPM in Schools: Preface?" March 1997, (page iii), Accessed on 7/13/12 at <http://www.epa.gov/region9/pesticides/ipm-in-schools-guide.pdf>

<sup>ii</sup> World Health Organization 2010. "Environment and Health Risks: a review of the influence and effects of social inequalities."