



For Immediate Release

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HEALTH & ENVIRONMENTAL GROUPS SAY “STOP THE SPRAY”

Leading Statewide Environmental Groups Call on the California Department of Food and Agriculture to Stop Aerial Pesticide Spraying for Apple Moth

San Francisco, CA – Environmental groups from across the state joined forces today calling for the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) to eliminate the use of aerial pesticides to control the potentially invasive light brown apple moth (LBAM). For months, the CDFA highlighted the lack of broad-based environmental opposition to the aerial application of pheromone-pesticides that began in the Monterey and Santa Cruz Counties last fall. However, leading environmental groups issued a strongly worded letter today challenging CDFA’s plans, including Environment California, CALPIRG, Coalition for Clean Air, Planning and Conservation League Fund, Pesticide Watch Education Fund, Citizens for Health, and Breast Cancer Fund. The public stand taken by these groups follows the resolution recently passed by Sierra Club members calling for a moratorium on further aerial spraying.

“No longer will we allow the Department of Food and Agriculture to hide under the environmental label,” said Paul Schramski, State Director of Pesticide Watch Education Fund. “Spraying pheromone-pesticides over our communities is not a sustainable option.”

The strong stance taken by health and environmental groups echoes uproar resulting from the large-scale pesticide spraying that CDFA conducted in Monterey and Santa Cruz Counties last fall. The three rounds of spraying, which took place in September – November 2007, are part of the agency’s efforts to eradicate LBAM, a species that CDFA maintains is a threat to agriculture. CDFA delayed its 2008 aerial spraying program due to public outcry and is considering reformulating the pheromone-pesticides for the aerial spraying later this year. In the interim, the agency has put forth a series of ground-based control measures that raise new environmental and health concerns.

“CDFA must place a moratorium on all activities that pose threats to human health and the environment until they have conducted a comprehensive assessment,” said Rene Guerrero, Public Health Program Manager for the Planning and Conservation League Foundation.

More than 600 people reported adverse health effects as a result of the spraying in Monterey and Santa Cruz Counties in 2007, with CDFA logging 330 reports and more than 300 additional complaints reported by environmental groups in the Monterey and Santa Cruz areas. Despite widespread public concern over the pesticides used, which are largely untested, CDFA and its agency counterparts have failed to adequately address environmental and health concerns.

“All apple moth control measures must be exhaustively tested for long and short –term effects,” said Rachel Gibson, Staff Attorney for Environment California.

CDFA initially attempted to gain the endorsement of environmental groups for its aerial spray program and recently hired public relations firm Porter-Novelli to allay concerns over the spray, as documented in an expose published by the *Monterey County Herald* late last month. The *Herald* article reported on the contents of emails between CDFA staff and agricultural public relations groups in 2007, revealing that the agency explicitly courted environmental groups’ support for the spray program. However, as citizens groups from within the spray zone, including California Alliance to Stop the Spray (CASS), StoptheSpray.org and the Coalition for Sustainable Action, raised concerns about the impact of the aerial spraying on human health and the environment, statewide environmental groups began to take notice. “We are about to lose the support of environmental groups,” wrote Marilyn Dolan of the Alliance for Food and Farming in an email to CDFA staff in an email dated Sept. 27, 2007. “They are just not getting the answers they need to support this application... If public support is not something you feel you need, then the Department should probably just proceed with the strategy expressed by [CDFA spokesperson] Steve Lyle...when he said ‘There is no vote.’”

The last line in today’s letter from the health and environmental groups to the CDFA Secretary A.G. Kawamura expressing their opposition to the spray summed up their stance: “We respectfully urge you to lead CDFA in the right direction by placing a moratorium on further aerial pesticide applications, and modify the control program to use the least-toxic [sic] options.”

Several environmental groups are hosting community educational events throughout the Monterey and San Francisco Bay Area. At 7:30pm tonight, Pesticide Watch Education Fund and the Center for Environmental Health will host a community informational meeting in the Women’s Building at 3543 18th Street, #8, Room A, San Francisco.

A copy of the environmental groups’ letter to Secretary A.G. Kawamura is available at www.stopthespray.org and www.lbamspray.com.

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Pesticide Watch Education Fund is a statewide public health and environmental group that works side-by-side with communities to clean up pesticide pollution and prevent pesticide exposure.