



Friends of Corte Madera Creek Watershed

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Policy on Integrated Pest Management to Control Invasive Plants

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(The text below is based on a statement made by the Marin Chapter of the California Native Plant Society on April 17, 2009)

Marin County is home to a large and diverse assemblage of native plants, including more than 100 that are considered rare, threatened or endangered. A major threat to these native plants is the expansion of a number of very aggressive invasive plants, such as cape ivy, French broom, ice plant and others. Although no precise data are available for the exact number of native plants that are at risk because of these invasive plants or which are currently threatened by them, the danger is here and it is real. One estimate is that just one species, French broom, is expanding its range by up to 30 to 60 acres per year on Mt. Tamalpais alone.

Each invasive plant infestation requires a different control approach tailored to the species, such as the topography, microclimate, and annual weather patterns. In general, integrated pest management (IPM, defined below by the County of Marin in 2009) is the best-practice invasive plant-control strategy recommended by knowledgeable professionals. It is the strategy of choice precisely because it mixes a variety of control techniques - mechanical, chemical, biological and others - to achieve the specificity required by the many different situations that occur.

Under these circumstances, Friends of Corte Madera Creek Watershed recommends the adoption of IPM strategies designed by qualified professionals for invasive plant infestations in Marin County wildlands. To that end, it recommends the inclusion of techniques normally employed in IPM, and it strongly opposes proposals to eliminate any of these techniques as potential tools in IPM strategies.

Specifically, it opposes any attempts to eliminate the use of herbicides in the battle against invasive plant pests. The problem has expanded to the point that a vigorous IPM is necessary not only to protect the native flora of Marin but also to address the huge fire potential many of the invasive plants add to Marin. In effective IPM programs, herbicides are used minimally and with extreme care, and are narrowly-targeted to minimize all environmental hazards associated with their application as required by law and as dictated by best current pest control practices.

“Integrated Pest Management” or “IPM” means a decision-making, record-keeping process for managing pests that uses monitoring to determine pest injury levels, and combines biological, cultural, mechanical, physical, and chemical tools and other management practices to control pests in a safe, cost effective, and environmentally sound manner that contributes to the protection of public health and sustainability. This method uses extensive knowledge about pests, such as infestations, thresholds, life histories, environmental requirements, and natural enemies to complement and facilitate biological and other natural control of pests. The method involves the use of non-chemical pest control methods and the careful use of least-toxic chemical methods when non-chemical methods have been exhausted or are not feasible.