

March 7, 2019

**Andrew Gottlieb Executive  
Director**

Clayton Edwards  
Director of Rights-of-Way Programs  
Massachusetts State Pesticide Bureau  
251 Causeway Street, Suite 500  
Boston, MA 02114-2151

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**Margo Fenn  
President**

**Charles Sumner  
Vice President**

RE: Eversource Energy 2019 Yearly Operational Plan for Cape Cod

**Bob Ciolek  
Treasurer**

Dear Mr. Edwards:

**Maureen O'Shea  
Clerk**

The Association to Preserve Cape Cod (APCC) submits the following comments expressing concern regarding Eversource Energy's 2019 Yearly Operational Plan (YOP) for Cape Cod.

**Michael Corrigan**

Founded in 1968, APCC is the leading regional non-profit environmental advocacy and education organization on Cape Cod. Supported by thousands of members from every Cape Cod town, APCC's mission is to promote policies and programs that foster the preservation of the Cape's natural resources. APCC focuses its efforts on the protection of groundwater, surface water, and wetland resources, preservation of open space, the promotion of responsible, planned growth and the achievement of an environmental ethic.

**DeeDee Holt**

**Thomas Huettner**

**Pat Hughes**

**Cheryl Lubin**

**Elysse Magnotto-Cleary**

The YOP submitted by Eversource proposes vegetation control and maintenance using a combination of mechanical vegetation removal and herbicide application on the utility's rights of way (ROW) on Cape Cod, which for this calendar year includes the towns of Barnstable, Bourne, Chatham, Dennis, Eastham, Falmouth, Harwich, Mashpee, Orleans, Sandwich, Truro, Wellfleet and Yarmouth. The YOP states that herbicides will be applied to control vegetation in most areas along its ROW, including within 10 feet of a surface water body or other wetland, and within 50 feet of a private drinking water well.

**Blue Magruder**

**Eliza McClennen**

**Maureen O'Shea**

**Kris Ramsay**

**Robert Summersgill**

As has been pointed out numerous times in public comments submitted over the past several years by APCC, Cape Cod has an abundance of sensitive habitats that support rare plant and animal species. Its sandy soils are highly permeable, allowing contaminants to easily leach through to groundwater. The groundwater is hydrologically connected to the Cape's many freshwater ponds and wetlands, and is also the source for the region's private and public drinking water supplies. These fragile resources are found on, under and in close proximity to Eversource's ROW.

**Taryn Wilson**

The YOP lists the herbicides Eversource plans to use on Cape Cod as being approved by the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources for use in designated Sensitive Areas. However, in reviewing the list of herbicides Eversource has specifically targeted for Cape Cod, APCC

notes that these products—despite their approval for use in “sensitive areas”—have all been linked in varying degrees to human health concerns and/or risks to the environment.

The list includes:

- **Imazapyr: (Arsenal Powerline, Polaris):** Imazapyr is slowly degraded by microbial metabolism and can be relatively persistent in soils. It has an average half-life in soils that range from one to five months. At pH above 5, it does not bind strongly with soil particles and can remain available for plant uptake in the environment. There are reports of unintended damage to desirable native plants when imazapyr has either exuded out of the roots of treated plants into the surrounding soil, or when intertwined roots transfer the herbicide to non-target plants.<sup>1</sup> The use of imazapyr in Norway was banned in 2001 “due to unacceptable risk for groundwater contamination, caused by high mobility and persistence in soil.” In 2003, the European Union voted to phase out the use of imazapyr for similar concerns.
- **Glyphosate (Rodeo):** In 2015, the World Health Organization’s International Agency for Research on Cancer classified glyphosate as “probably carcinogenic to humans.” Their scientists found there was a particularly strong link between glyphosate and non-Hodgkin lymphoma. On March 28, 2017, the California Environmental Protection Agency’s Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment confirmed that it would add glyphosate to California’s Proposition 65 list of chemicals known to cause cancer. Some research has also indicated that glyphosate may be an endocrine disruptor. It has been linked to liver disease, birth defects and reproductive problems in laboratory animals, and it may kill beneficial gut bacteria and damage the DNA in human embryonic, placental and umbilical cord cells. One study suggests that glyphosate may affect pathogens such as salmonella in ways that can contribute to antibiotic resistance. Other recent research suggests it can interfere with hormones.<sup>2</sup> Glyphosate acts as a powerful antibiotic against lactobacillus and bifidobacterium bacteria. Without these bacteria, honeybees cannot digest nectar and honey and become disoriented in their foraging.<sup>3</sup>
- **Metsulfuron-Methyl (Escort XP, Patriot):** Multiple sources point to research that suggests the chemical may be toxic to birds, the aquatic environment, honey bees, and likely to other pollinators as well.
- **Triclopyr (Garlon 4 Ultra):** Acute exposure to this herbicide has also been linked to blood, kidney, liver and nervous system toxicity in animals. Though not widely classified as a carcinogen, two unpublished studies on triclopyr exposure to rats and mice have suggested increased frequency of mammary gland cancer at high doses. In experimental animal studies, high doses of triclopyr have been shown to cause reproductive and developmental abnormalities, including increased fetal death and skeletal malformations, as well as liver and kidney defects. At least one study indicates that mammal populations in forested areas treated with triclopyr have been significantly reduced. Because triclopyr is a very potent plant growth disruptor, unintended target plants may be destroyed due to spray drift and runoff from rain. Additionally, triclopyr has been shown to disrupt the normal growth and nutrient cycling properties of microorganisms, fungi, mosses and algae, which are essential to the normal function of healthy ecosystems.<sup>4</sup> The toxicity of triclopyr to aquatic organisms is high compared to glyphosate. Triclopyr toxicity to wildlife ranges from not acutely toxic to slightly acutely toxic for birds and honeybees, and slightly to highly acutely toxic in fish, amphibians and aquatic invertebrates.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> National Pesticide Information Center, 2004, Weed Control Methods Handbook, The Nature Conservancy, Tu et al.

<sup>2</sup> Grossman, Elizabeth, National Geographic, April 23, 2015

<sup>3</sup> Vallianatos, Evaggelos; Why Honeybees Don’t Have A Chance In The Midst Of Pesticides; Huffington Post, 03/09/2017

<sup>4</sup> National Pesticide Information Center, 2002, Weed Control Methods Handbook, The Nature Conservancy, Tu et al.

<sup>5</sup> Marin Municipal Water District Vegetation Management Plan Herbicide Risk Assessment, DRAFT-8/27/08



- **Fosamine Ammonium (Krenite S):** Fosamine ammonium has a moderate potential to reach shallow groundwater in sandy soils. It is shown to not break down very well in water, and shows long-term persistence if the chemical reaches groundwater.<sup>6</sup> The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency acknowledges fosamine ammonium has the potential to contaminate surface water through spray drift and runoff. Aquatic ecosystems potentially at risk include water bodies such as ponds, lakes, reservoirs, streams, rivers and estuaries adjacent to or downstream from a treated field.<sup>7</sup>

In addition to the above-listed active herbicide products proposed for use, the largely unpublished “inert ingredients” and ingredients used as surfactants for the herbicide products are an unknown risk. According to the National Institute of Environmental Health Science, numerous studies indicate that inert ingredients, which are not labeled and considered proprietary business information, may enhance pesticide toxicity on the nervous system, the cardiovascular system, mitochondria, genetic material and hormone systems. These so-called inert ingredients may in fact be biologically or chemically active. Most of the tests required to register a pesticide are performed with the active ingredient alone, not with every ingredient present in the product.<sup>8</sup>

MDAR’s own publication, “Herbicide Evaluation Technical Update No. 2: List of Approved Surfactants for Use in Sensitive Areas on Rights-of-Way – June 2010,” states: *“The review of these compounds (surfactants) is limited by toxicological data gaps, particularly with regard to the endpoint of endocrine disruption. While we would prefer to have more information on toxicity, we believe that the hazards posed to non-target aquatic organisms by these surfactants are limited by a low potential for significant exposure. The modeled results represent the best available information at this time for these compounds which have a limited database of information on toxicity and environmental fate.”* (Emphasis added.)

There are too many unknowns associated with the proposed herbicides and their long-term effects on the Cape’s fragile environment and human population. What *is* known about these products is troubling. If an adverse effect on the Cape’s environment or human health is ever detected that is linked to herbicide use on Eversource’s ROW, that information will have arrived too late to undo the harm that has occurred. Eversource’s continued use of these herbicides as part of its YOP has the potential to adversely affect the Cape’s sensitive habitats and water resources, as well as pose human health risks from exposure to herbicides, and this potential risk is enough to warrant discontinuation of their application above the Cape’s aquifer and in its sensitive habitat areas.

APCC must also point out that the practice of clear-cut mowing, which Eversource has stated is one of its alternative methods to control vegetation, can be devastating to sensitive habitats and rare species when done indiscriminately. There are other methods of vegetation management that can and should be utilized that will not introduce toxic chemicals to the environment or result in a blanket leveling of all habitats within the ROW.

Manual removal of vegetation is one of those methods. Hand removal of targeted woody vegetation along the ROW has been successfully demonstrated by volunteer groups in several Cape Cod towns. For several years now, the Brewster Conservation Trust and the Harwich Conservation Trust have each conducted vegetation management

---

<sup>6</sup> National Pesticide Information Center

<sup>7</sup> Problem Formulation for the Ecological Risk and Drinking Water Exposure Assessments in Support of the Registration Review of Fosamine Ammonium, EPA, 2010

<sup>8</sup> National Institute of Environmental Health Science, 2006 Dec; 114(12): 1803–1806



programs on their respective Brewster and Harwich properties along the ROW. Both organizations have proven that undesirable vegetation can be effectively removed with a small group of volunteers using only hand tools. Their efforts achieved the same objective as Eversource's Vegetation Management Plan (VMP) and its YOP, but without the risk of herbicides or the destruction of clearcutting. Eversource may view the use of herbicides versus hand removal as a cost-saving business decision, but the health of the Cape's environment and its citizens should not be compromised based on the company's bottom line.

APCC urges MDAR and the Massachusetts State Pesticide Bureau to be more responsive to the concerns expressed by the broad spectrum of Cape Cod citizens, elected officials and organizations opposed to the utility's VMP policies and the recently submitted YOP. MDAR and Eversource should work closely with community leaders to actively seek out viable low-impact options for vegetation management, such as hand removal, that will not place the Cape Cod's fragile environment at risk.

Sincerely,



Andrew Gottlieb  
Executive Director



Don Keeran  
Assistant Director

cc: State Senator Julian Cyr  
State Senator Viriato deMacedo  
State Rep. Sarah Peake  
State Rep. Timothy Whelan  
State Rep. William Crocker  
State Rep. Dylan Fernandes  
State Rep. David Vieira  
State Rep. Randy Hunt  
Secretary Matthew Beaton, Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs  
Commissioner Martin Suuberg, Department of Environmental Protection  
Barnstable Town Council  
Bourne Board of Selectmen  
Chatham Board of Selectmen  
Dennis Board of Selectmen  
Eastham Board of Selectmen  
Falmouth Board of Selectmen  
Harwich Board of Selectmen  
Mashpee Board of Selectmen  
Orleans Board of Selectmen  
Sandwich Board of Selectmen  
Truro Board of Selectmen  
Wellfleet Selectboard  
Yarmouth Board of Selectmen  
William Hayes, Eversource Energy

