

To: Marin County Board of Supervisors
From: Maureen Block, Founder & board member, The Ryder Foundation
Re: Marin Department of Agriculture's 10-Year Invasive Weed Plan
Date: November 26, 2013

I am writing as a board member and founder of The Ryder Foundation (founded 2005). We are a 501(c)(3) based in Tiburon established to help raise money and awareness for groups that are helping children with autism now. Our mission is to help facilitate changes that can help children and families with autism now, and not tomorrow and not in the future.

I also am a mother that has "reversed" all signs and symptoms of autism in my own child, now 13 years old. He was a non-verbal, no eye contact, socially disconnected child with chronic diarrhea and other health issues associated with autistic spectrum disorder. He is also a statistic for a confirmed diagnosis of Lyme disease. I help other parents figure out solutions to help get their children on the right track developmentally and health-wise.

Both as an advocate for other families with children with autistic spectrum disorder and pervasive developmental delays and as a mother of a child, who has substantially overcome developmental delays and the diagnosis of autism, I am speaking out against the proposed use of sprayed pesticides in Marin by the Marin Department of Agriculture.

Much of the work I have done for my child, which is according to a protocol that is helping tens of thousands of children, is to strengthen their immune system, clean up their diet and integrate their senses. Some of this work is medically based, some education and some sensory-based. What I have learned from my experience with autism - including extensive research and discussions with experts - is that the cause of this unraveling of normal development in our young is most certainly environmental. Epigenetics is now accepted science. The science of epigenetics traces gene mutations to environmental triggers. These gene mutations are increasingly understood as a source of the rise in chronic disease, as well as the rise in debilitating developmental disorders such as autism. This again brings us back to our environment. Proponents of genetic abnormalities without environmental triggers no longer have much traction.

Adding more pesticides to an already chemically overloaded ecosystem, regardless of the reason, is unsafe and short sighted. There are so many problems with this method of weed control including issues of drift, affects on the flora and fauna of the immediate and surrounding areas and water sheds, economic issues such as the desired growth in the organic business in our area, etc. The issue of cost is a non-starter as the environmental, health and social costs of spraying chemicals far outweigh the price tag on the can of spray and the cost of hiring pilots or backpack sprayers for a few days. The costs of the potential future damage these

chemicals can do is practically certain, even if we can't determine the price tag for that today.

Please implement the precautionary principal and do no harm by choosing a safer and more certain method of weed control. Take the time, have the commitment and provide the resources to develop methods for weed control that don't involve pesticides. The weeds will not go away, so we must devise solutions. But the public's willingness to accept that pesticides are "safe" because there is only a "little bit for a short time" has ended. Public opposition is mounting and will continue to mount against any plan involving aerial and ground spraying of pesticides, as people become aware of the project.

Sincerely,


Maureen Block