

# Precautionary Pest Management: The San Francisco Experience

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**People will follow those who lead –  
if you don't have a vision,  
all you have is the fight.**

*(Bruce Vincent, Vincent Logging, Libby Montana)*

- **IPM born of a fight**
  - Industries who make the pesticides vs. people on the ground using the products vs. citizen groups who oppose the use of those pesticides (*where are the academics?*)
- **Offers a solution**, but in and of itself, IPM may not be the vision

# A picture of my children's vision of their world

- Climate refugees
  - Peak Oil
  - Body Burden
    - Asthma
  - Breast Cancer

# **Science points us to these problems but proof of cause and effect can be elusive**

- Can not afford for uncertainty to become an excuse for **paralysis of leadership**
- **Need for a better decision making process.** Governments are seeking ways to make decisions that will counteract this vision of devastation

# Precautionary Principle (Vorsorge: “fore caring”)

- **No longer sufficient to ask:**
  - Is it legal?
  - Is it safe?
- **Must also ask:**
  - Is it necessary?

**The Precautionary Principle places IPM into a larger context. One that is explicit about:**

- 1. Obligation to minimize harm**
- 2. Public Involvement**

# How do you determine if it's necessary?

- **Risk Assessment vs. Alternatives Assessment**  
*(Dr. Mary O'Brien – Making Better Environmental Decisions.....)*
- How much harm is **allowable** vs. How little harm is **possible**?
- **Science, costs, benefits of all alternatives**
- **Choose the alternative that minimizes harm**

# RoundUp: Gardeners and Community ask: Is it necessary?

- 90% reduction because often it is not necessary
  - **Goats, hand weeding, flamers**
  - **Prevention: mulch, sealing cracks**
  - **Acceptance (lawns as meadows)**
- Sometimes RoundUp is the alternative that minimizes harm
  - **Median strips**
  - **Airport runways**
  - **Invasive weeds in “Natural Areas”**

# Who determines if it's Necessary?

- Democracy: include all affected parties early on
- Ultimately it is the **elected officials** who make the determination
- Let us not fear the dissenters, but allow them to sharpen the debate, push us towards new directions

# **Dissenters brought IPM to SF**

- **Expose** in the media (1996) – “Parks are for people not pesticides”
- **Elected Officials Respond** – Ban all pesticides by 2000
- **Cooler Heads Prevail** – Ban except for an Approved list
- **Program is put in place** –
  - More than a list
  - IPM Coordinator

# **Benefits of Precautionary Pest Management (IPM)**

- **Reductions:**
  - 90% reduction in RoundUp; 50-70% Reduction overall
  - Elimination of indoor sprays, most toxic pesticides
- **Innovation, Creativity**
  - Many people asking “is it necessary”
- **Improved Morale, Cooperation among agencies**
  - Technical Advisory Committee, Training, Awards
- **Trust, Ability to use pesticides when necessary**
  - Transparent decision making, Approved List, Public Accountability

**“The world is run by those who show up”** *(Bruce Vincent)*

- **Tremendous experience** in the room
- Applaud ourselves for how far we have come, and then the **real work begins**
- We **KNOW** what IPM means (who cares about getting all the words in a definition just right)
- **Broaden our horizon**, find partners in some unexpected places

# Where must we show up?

- Make precautionary principle of IPM readily accessible to the general public
  - **Certification:**
    - 3<sup>rd</sup> party certified, can not be industry based
- **Green Building** – US Green Building Council: LEED (Leadership in energy and Environmental Design): New Construction, Existing Buildings, Landscape.
- **Indoor Air Quality** – worker productivity/ disability access

# Where must we show up?

- **Market forces** are telling us – don't be afraid to embrace a precautionary approach.
  - Ex. **Sam's Club offering organic produce**

# **IPM offers a powerful model for precautionary thinking.**

- I invite all of you experts in IPM to create a world where we do not fear our critics but work together towards a common vision, a world shaped by “fore caring”.

# **So that when we ask:**

- **Is it legal?**
  - Confident our laws are protective of all life
- **Is it safe?**
  - Sufficient data and testing so that we understand how a chemical interacts within organisms and ecosystems
- **Is it necessary?**
  - Affected communities are at the table, our elected officials are empowered to examine all the alternatives, and to minimize harm