

MPRB Pesticide Advisory Committee Meeting #5

2/12/19

Golf/Sports Turf Subcommittee Notes

Present: Christy, Jack

**PARKING LOT RECOMMENDATIONS** (i.e., list of possible practices to consider as recommendations to the park board; note: the subcommittee/committee has not agreed or decided on these, this is just a brainstormed list!)

- Alternative plants w/a subsurface barrier planted around trees
- Letting grass grow up to tree, and line trimming grass around trees, couple with careful mowing/mowing training to avoid tree damage
  - Jack mentioned that grass around trees rather than bare dirt can be considered more aesthetically pleasing
- Wood chip volcanoes around trees – [Jack raised concerns around the maintenance it would take to keep wood chips in place, and remove weeds from the wood chips]
- Let existing grass around trees grow tall
- Seed low maintenance fescues around trees
- Review fertility program to ensure we are maximizing fertility management as a strategy for weed control
- Review turf mix – we're growing some mix, which ones, are they the best ones for pesticide elimination
- Outreach and education for users facilitating buy in for any change in management practices that the MPRB undertakes
- Surveys to understand how Mpls parks users feel about health benefits of reduced/eliminated pesticide use, vs aesthetic expectations of manicured turf grass
- Workshops for park staff to visit and/or work with other park staff around the country managing for pesticide free parks; changing imaginations around what is possible;
- For sports turf (aglilime/warning track) – timing of weed removal – if remove top of the plant with a stirrup hoe during dry conditions, the plant has a harder time regrowing vegetative portion (takes longer); this is a practice used in pesticide-free horticulture
- Keep bees on golf courses as an indicator of ecosystem health, and as a warning system/check back around pesticide impacts – management practices at area golf courses have changed when bees were brought to the course and the pesticide impacts on them were evident

**Detailed Committee Notes from 2/12:**

- Simba Blood mentioned alternative plants w/a subsurface barrier around trees as a possible management option
- expectations of golf course clientele and their choices are key
- having an outreach/communication strategy with users around any management changes will likely be important and key to facilitating buy in for any changing practices
  - Mid Midwest Grows Green is a nonprofit that has experience working with communities around this type of outreach, and may be able to partner with Mpls Parks to bring resources into the community to do this work

- we generally agree that we do not want to replace glyphosate or other pesticides with more toxic pesticide alternatives
- can we invest more \$/staff in management budgets to achieve ecological/manual management and removal – can we make this a win for park staff who are otherwise reluctant to change their practices? (by getting them more resources)
- Jack would like the park board to consider ‘special use permits’ that could be used to apply glyphosate, with a process and documentation required to show that other alternatives have been considered first
- Jack raised the issue that golf courses moving to pesticide-free management will either be cost prohibitive, or will result in a golf course that won’t compete for golf users in the metro area
- Christy brought up the history of golf, and what changing imagination or expectations around golf courses could look like- golf originated on unused animal pastures that did not have a manicured surface.
- Jack brought up that turf species used on golf courses are all invasive and evolved in Europe to deal with conditions there; native grasses adapted to our conditions are too long to play on
- Managing grasses for fertility is a key way to reduce pesticide use → reviewing fertility practices could be a recommendation to the board
- Christy brought up the question of whether there is room in users expectations for a different type of course – if users knew they were trading weeds for better health impacts, how would they feel? Do we know the answer to this? Can we do surveys and user outreach to find out?
- Sports Turf – vinegar/salts – there are concerns around what these do to the soil, and the risks posed to staff (with vinegar in particular)
- Need strategies for Cart paths (cracks), parking lots, gardens that are also part of golf courses → we could apply recommendations developed by the garden subcommittee for gardens
- We discussed issues with managing KY Blue Grass – it both takes a lot of maintenance and can out compete other varieties that you try to seed
- Jack raised the issue of using glyphosate to kill existing turf cover, if you want to replace it with something else
  - Are there alternative methods of removing existing cover? Black plastic or other ground covers used in farming, etc
- Managing turf – bentgrass is more tolerant than bluegrass, every spike mark and area of exposed soil needs to be managed
- Jack asked for and received reports from 4 golf course managers in the MPRB – these reports are very helpful, address managers’ background and experience, where golf course managers are using glyphosate now, how they view alternative practices
- Note that the manager at Theo Wirth golf course is not using glyphosate at all – that is a place we should be having additional conversations and info gathering around why/how the manager has made that choice, and whether that approach can be extended to the other courses
- We asked Jeremy to send a similar inquiry to managers of sports turf and managers of wild areas – asking – how do they use glyphosate currently, what do they expect their future uses to be; how many man hours would be required to replace glyphosate use with other practices – in some ways this overlaps with the info staff gave in powerpoints, but is useful to have documented responses to these specific questions

- Jack noted that when he managed a golf course, he didn't use glyphosate around the trees and instead did line trimming, because he didn't like the look of the bare soil
- We discussed other opportunities for golf course use by community members – community gardens, etc
- Jack mentioned Beth Paige golf course in NY – they went pesticide free, but then went back to using pesticides b/c of limits to play or reductions in user expectations
- Public golf courses are played more than private courses – have to manage the turf to recover and grow under high use
- Premier baseball fields – what is the difference in rental cost for tier 1 (managed more intensively w/pesticides) vs tier 2 (managed using fewer pesticides) fields?
- Jack mentioned that clover in rough on golf courses provides pollinator habitat
- Christy didn't mention in this meeting, but has since talked to colleagues who work in the Spivak lab at UMN on pollinator health – they mentioned that a number of area golf courses have started keeping bees, and that keeping the bees and seeing impacts of pesticides on bee health has motivated managers to change/decrease pesticide use
- We will need to address the issue of time scale – there are short term uses of glyphosate (immediate weed removal) and long term (removing existing turf to replace it) – recommendations will need to address both of these scales
- Jack suggested that chemicals are part of IPM and have a place; we could use a stronger set of documentation about when choices to use chemicals are made (i.e., whether all other options have been exhausted)