



Thank You For Your Feedback!

Thank you to the 278 Sebastopol residents who sent in your STEP Survey cards!

We appreciate you letting us know what you think of this newsletter, how you use it, and what articles you'd like to see in the future.

So, what were your responses?

■ **80% said you find *The Next STEP (TNS)* newsletter helpful and interesting.** Comments included "Thank you!!", "It's awesome!", "Keep it coming!", and "I love it!" (which, of course, is always nice to hear!).

■ Of those responding about pesticide use, **44% said you use pesticides at home or work.** Of these, about 45% use only natural pesticides, 21% use only synthetic, and 24% use both.

This reflects a significant shift towards natural pesticides from last year's survey. This year, almost twice as many pesticide users are using only natural pesticides, 34% fewer are using just synthetic, and about 50% fewer are using both.

■ We were delighted that 61% of you said that **this newsletter has helped you reduce your use of**

Want to see past issues of TNS? They're available on the City's website at <www.ci.sebastopol.ca.us/programs/step.htm>. **We've also created a new ongoing index by topic;** see <www.healthyworld.org/STEPIndex.html>.

toxics. It was valuable to hear your examples, to know what you found useful. Readers said, for example, that you're now "using vinegar as a multi-purpose cleaner," using "tea tree oil for mildew," cleaning your sink with baking soda, and no longer using Roundup and weed-and-feed.

Congratulations to everyone who has found a way to reduce or avoid using toxics! With these choices, you're supporting a healthier environment for yourself, your family, and your community.

And **thank you for your many excellent ideas for future issues** (stay tuned!) as well as your appreciation for our work. We're delighted to be of assistance.

Please keep your feedback coming! Your input helps us create a newsletter that's useful for you!

Key Facts About STEP

For those who had questions about the STEP project, here are some key facts:

■ **STEP is a project of the City of Sebastopol,** created by the City Council in 2000.

■ **A key goal of this project is to protect our shared health** by supporting voluntary reductions in the toxics that flow from urban use into our community's ecosystems, air, and water supply (see article other side). That's why this newsletter is in our water bills!

■ **The Next STEP is created entirely by volunteer efforts,** because of our commitment to a healthier community for all.

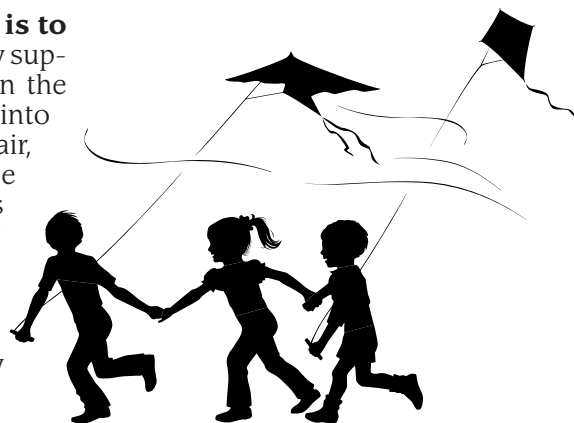
Update: Catnip and Mosquitoes

In a previous issue of *TNS* (Vol. 2, No. 5), we indicated that studies had shown that one of catnip's essential oils was 10 times more effective against mosquitoes than the highly-toxic DEET that's in most commercial insect repellants.

We're glad to report that you can now buy catnip in a spray form, making it easier to use. Richard Fagerlund, a board certified entomologist at the University of New Mexico who writes *The Bug Man* column, says that he's found this spray to be effective and not expensive. He says that "catnip, in my opinion, is the best alternative to pesticides in repelling mosquitoes." One distributor of the spray is at <www.insectrepel.com>, (800) 356-5099. More about Fagerlund is at <www.askthebugman.com>.

■ **STEP costs the City almost nothing.** With no added postage costs, the only direct costs to the City are for copying (on the City's machine) and about \$60 a year in miscellaneous costs. In Sebastopol's \$4.5 million annual budget, this is literally a tiny drop in the bucket – and a bargain for our health, now and long into the future.

■ **Toxics have been shown to threaten us all.** Numerous studies have shown that even urban pesticide use can increase rates of cancer, and harm our neurological, reproductive, and immune systems. This harm is just not necessary, with the wonderful alternatives available. We're grateful that Sebastopol's City Council has been so forward-thinking and cared so deeply about the true best interest of our community and its residents.



Protecting Our Water Supply From Toxics

Urban Pesticide Use Adds Up ...

People often think that the use of toxic pesticides (and the exposure risk from them) is primarily on farms and in food – and indeed U.S. agriculture uses almost one billion pounds of pesticides each year.

However **many people don't realize that cumulative use by households is also significant.** Over 280 million pounds are used each year in the U.S., in our homes, gardens, schools, offices, roads, public buildings, and parks. These pesticides often stay active onsite, move offsite, and accumulate in our shared earth, air, and water – putting us and our essential ecosystems at risk of harm from toxic exposure.

These individual uses do add up. For instance, according to the City of San Francisco, **residential areas of the Bay Area have been identified as major contributors of pesticide pollution in local creeks, wastewater, and the SF Bay.** Studies show that as much as 60% of two pesticides, **diazinon** and **chlorpyrifos**, entering Bay Area wastewater treatment plants came from residences rather than from agriculture or industrial sources.

SF says that **the use of organophosphate (OP) pesticides like these has caused a serious wa-**

ter quality problem in California and the Bay Area.

Pesticide pollution is one of the reasons that the SF Bay and Bay Area creeks were recently listed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as impaired, both as ecosystems and for recreational use, including fishing. [1]

Consumers buy OPs under brand names like Ortho and Spectracide to combat insects like ants, flies, and lawn grubs. **Unfortunately, OPs have been shown to cause serious acute and chronic neurological harm to humans, other mammals, fish, birds, and beneficial insects.** They're also commonly found in surface and groundwater.

... Even In Our Own Backyard

This pollution is happening close to home for us. In a recent one-year study, **the insecticide diazinon was found in the Russian River and Laguna** [2]. Based on the time of year it was found, **the source was determined to be urban settings,** like homes and gardens. **This finding is likely the tip of the iceberg.** The report notes that many other pesticides used in Sonoma County were not tested for.

This is especially relevant in Sebastopol, as the water for city residents and businesses comes from city wells, which can be impacted by pollution in our groundwater. According to Sue Kelly, Sebastopol's Public Works Engineering Director, **Sebastopol's wells have at times been contaminated by discharges into groundwater.** A dramatic example was when Well #5 on Fannen Ave. was contaminated with PCE from dry cleaning and had to be removed from service in 1987. The City had to develop a new well (#7, on Cooper Rd.) to replace the water supply. According to Kelly, "It's critical to do all that we can to prevent contamination of our groundwater. It's important that people know that their actions can impact the quality of our water."

As a result of the pesticides being found in area waterways, the SF Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board has mandated that local agencies

search for ways to prevent further contamination. Thus, many Bay Area agencies are looking for ways to reduce pesticide use and educate people about how to decrease the amount of runoff into our water systems. This includes Sebastopol!

How You Can Help Protect Our Waters!

Realize that what you put on your lawn, driveways, and sidewalks is likely to be washed into the storm drains. From there it goes into the Laguna de Santa Rosa, Atascadero Creek, and other streams and rivers – harming ecosystems, animals, and potentially contaminating our water supply. Storm drain water is not processed before it goes into the environment, and the cumulative and synergistic effect of many different applications can multiply the harm caused. That's why you'll often find storm drain labels that say "No Dumping – Flows to Laguna."

Some key ways that you can help protect our precious water:

■ **Don't dispose of toxics in household or storm drains, or in the trash.** Save them for Household Toxics Roundup Days; for more info call 565-3375.

■ **Reduce or eliminate your use of toxic pesticides** at home, and encourage reduction at work or school, to reduce their presence in our local air and water. (Read *The Next STEP* for tips on how to do that!)

■ **Delight in the healthier world you've helped create!**

~ Patricia Dines

Thanks to Laurel Marcus, Sue Kelly, Rebecca Dwan, & Craig Litwin for your assistance!

SOURCES: [1] <www.sfgov.org/casf/pages/pestlabel_education/ple_main.htm> [2] *Temporal Distribution Of Insecticide Residues In Four California Rivers* <www.cdpr.ca.gov/docs/emp/pubs/ehapreps/eh976rep.pdf>



ABOUT STEP

The Next STEP is published six times a year for Sebastopol residents by the **Sebastopol Toxics Education Program (STEP).**

STEP's mission is to support Sebastopol citizens in reducing their toxic use and exposure, creating a healthier and safer Sebastopol for everyone.

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