



Monterey County Board of Supervisors

Revised Response to the

2019 - 2020 Monterey County Civil Grand Jury

Topic: “Enhancing Public Access to Pesticide Use Information, An Opportunity for the Agricultural Commissioner’s Office”

2019 - 2020 Monterey County Civil Grand Jury Final Report –

Topic: “Enhancing Public Access to Pesticide Use Information, An Opportunity for the Agricultural Commissioner’s Office”

Henry Gonzales, Agricultural Commissioner

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REPORT TITLE: 2019 - 2020 Monterey County Civil Grand Jury Final Report –
“Enhancing Public Access to Pesticide Use Information, An Opportunity for the Agricultural
Commissioner’s Office”

RESPONSE BY: Monterey County Board of Supervisors

RESPONSE TO: Findings F1, F2 and F3

FINDINGS

F1. There is a prevalent and genuine need for residents of Monterey County, and other interest groups, to have access to unbiased, scientifically reviewed information about pesticides.

Response F1:

The Monterey County Agricultural Commissioner’s Office (MCACO) agrees in part with the finding. The MCACO agrees that there is a “genuine” need for residents of Monterey County and other interested groups to have access to unbiased, scientifically reviewed information about pesticides. The MCACO website has “...a vast array of information about the use of pesticides, including links to State Agencies and other relevant sources.”

The MCACO disagrees that there is a “prevalent” need for residents of Monterey County and other interested groups to have access to unbiased, scientifically reviewed information about pesticides. The MCACO is already engaged with the community in providing and communicating unbiased, scientifically reviewed information about pesticides to the community. Through these outreach events, the MCACO hears directly from residents of Monterey County and other interest groups regarding their concerns and the type of pesticide information needed. In addition, the MCACO staff spends countless hours in community organization outreach events which include MCACO sponsored outreach events for both the agricultural industry and the public. Further, the MCACO has full-time dedicated staff to answer questions from the public and agricultural industry regarding pesticide concerns/issues and/or to provide information during Office hours (8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.) on Monday through Friday.

F2. The scope of MCACO’s mission, resources, and outreach capabilities mean that it can play a central role as a forum for fact-based and authoritative information to the public about pesticide-related facts and issues.

Response F2:

The MCACO agrees in part with the finding. The MCACO agrees that MCACO’s mission means that it can play a central role as a forum for fact-based and authoritative information to the public about pesticide-related facts and issues. The MCACO, to the extent feasible given available staff and funding resources, is already playing a central role as a forum to the public by publishing and providing fact-based and authoritative information on the MCACO website, the MCACO Facebook page, and by sponsoring and/or participating in community outreach events where subject matters experts are

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invited to share their subject-matter expertise. Also, through its dedicated staff, the MCACO is already answering queries from the public about pesticide-related facts and issues. The MCACO, in partnership with Monterey County residents, members of the public, community, educational and agricultural industry groups, plays a central role as a forum for providing fact-based and authoritative information to the public about pesticide-related facts and issues. To the extent that the finding recommends the creation and maintenance of an independent forum beyond the outreach and informational services which are already provided by MCACO, the MCACO does not have the staff resources or funding to create and maintain such a forum.

F3. MCACO currently uses social media such as Facebook, but has not availed itself of the ever-expanding range of other outreach opportunities, including other social media outlets. Also underutilized are printed bilingual (English/Spanish) materials that could reach a wider range of the County's different communities.

Response F3:

The MCACO agrees in part with the finding. As recently as last year, the MCACO launched and availed itself to a Facebook page. Since then, the MCACO has endeavored to communicate timely and most recent information in both English and Spanish.

The MCACO does not agree that it has not availed itself of the ever-expanding range of other outreach opportunities, including other social media outlets. As stated under the finding, the MCACO has, for the first time, created a Facebook account and understands there are other social media platforms from which MCACO could communicate information to the public. Due to limited staff resources and funding, participation in additional social media outlets is not feasible at this time.

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RESPONSE BY: Monterey County Board of Supervisors

RESPONSE TO: Recommendations R1, R2 and R3

RECOMMENDATIONS

R1. Within budget limitations and personnel constraints, MCACO should create a simple, accessible forum on MCACO website that is general-public focused, and that publicizes relevant pesticide information directly to the Monterey County community. This website forum should be bilingual in content (English/Spanish).

This recommendation should be completed within one year of the publication of this report.

Response to R1:

The recommendation will be implemented within budget limitations and personnel constraints. Relevant pesticide information is already published, in both English and Spanish, on the MCACO website and in our new quarterly newsletter which is also available on the MCACO’s website.

R2. MCACO should expand its use of social media to a more varied range of portals, outlets, media and platforms. These outlets should link to the proposed general public pesticide forum, when active, and also publicize MCACO’s rich resources of pesticide information throughout. This expanded outreach should include printed materials and bilingual (English/Spanish) content. This should be completed within one year of the publication of this report.

Response to R2:

The recommendation will be evaluated as staff resources and funding become available to expand to other social media portals, outlets and/or platforms. The MCACO already has a website and for the first time, as of last year, a Facebook page that are simple, accessible forums that are general-public focused and publicize relevant pesticide information directly to the Monterey County community.

R3. MCACO should prepare its current social media and all expanded outreach channels to support contingency planning and public notifications for any incidents under MCACO’s

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purview that might develop or create public interest or concern. This should be operational within six months of the publication of this report.

Response to R3:

The recommendation has been implemented. The MCACO is part of Monterey County's Office of Emergency Services and has adopted a Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) that already supports contingency planning and public notifications. The MCACO COOP is designed to provide timely direction, control, and coordination to the Monterey County leadership and other critical customers before, during, and after an event or upon notification of a credible threat. The plan was last updated on March 19, 2020.

In addition, the MCACO will continue to use its website and Facebook page to notify, guide, and inform the public of emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic and any incidents under MCACO's purview that might develop or create public interest or concern.



Monterey County Board of Supervisors

Board Order

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A motion was made by Supervisor Luis A. Alejo, seconded by Supervisor John M. Phillips to:

- a. Consider approval of the revised response to the 2019 - 2020 Monterey County Civil Grand Jury Final Report "Enhancing Public Access to Pesticide Use Information, An Opportunity for the Agricultural Commissioner's Office"; and
- b. Direct the County Administrative Officer to file the approved response with the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court, County of Monterey, by September 25, 2020. (ADDED VIA ADDENDA)

PASSED AND ADOPTED on this 22nd day of September 2020, by roll call vote:

AYES: Supervisors Alejo, Phillips, Lopez and Adams

NOES: Supervisor Parker

ABSENT: None

(Government Code 54953)

I, Valerie Ralph, Clerk of the Board of Supervisors of the County of Monterey, State of California, hereby certify that the foregoing is a true copy of an original order of said Board of Supervisors duly made and entered in the minutes thereof of Minute Book 82 for the meeting September 22, 2020.

Dated: September 22, 2020

File ID: CR 20-083

Agenda Item No.: 15.1

Valerie Ralph, Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
County of Monterey, State of California



Joel G. Pablo, Deputy