

# Jim Powell: City of Madison violates its own pesticide policies



[Steve Elbow's article](#) on the Madison Parks Division's use of pesticides reflects the city's schizophrenic history of pesticide use — and [several violations of its own policy](#).

In 1991, the City Council severely restricted the use of pesticides, and in 2002 Mayor Sue Bauman [placed a moratorium](#) on the use of Roundup (glyphosate). In 2004, the city developed a pesticide policy (see attached PDF), stating: “The City of Madison agrees with the U.S. EPA that ‘all pesticides are toxic to some degree, and the commonplace widespread use of pesticides is both a major environmental problem and a public health issue.’”

The policy, in line with an “integrated pest management” (IPM) approach, states that all city departments “should give preference to non-pesticide management practices” and use the “least risky” pesticides only as “a last resort.” A Pesticide Management Advisory Subcommittee of experts was created (by ordinance) to review city pesticide use and advise on IPM practices. The 2004 pesticide policy appears to still be in place, but in 2013, Mayor Paul Soglin dissolved the pesticide committee.

In 2015, the city’s Pollinator Protection Task Force (see PDF, attached) recommended that the city limit pesticide use to protect bees and butterflies.

Regardless, as Elbow reported, city departments continue to use hundreds of gallons of pesticides (glyphosate; 2,4-D; and several others) on athletic fields and other city lands. Oddly, the city’s assistant parks superintendent is quoted in Elbow's story as saying said that the city only bans pesticides in median strips; he apparently has never seen the city’s pesticide policy, which says: “The City shall NOT USE (emphasis in original) pesticides to control dandelions and other broadleaf weeds on general parklands, median strips, street terraces, roadsides, general lawn areas, and athletic fields that are not reserved, nor are fees paid for their use.”

The Parks Division also admits to applying Imidacloprid, a neonicotinoid that the task force specifically requested the city not use because of its known negative effects on bees. The city pesticide policy prohibits the use “any pesticide under EPA Special Review.” [Imidacloprid is under review.](#)

Something is seriously amiss here.

Is glyphosate one of the “least risky” pesticides the city could use, per its policy? In 2015 the [World Health Organization classified](#) glyphosate as a “probable carcinogen,” and numerous scientific studies have associated it with birth defects, low birth rates, hormonal disruption and other human health effects — as well as negative effects on amphibians, fish and other animals. Just last Friday, July 7, [California added glyphosate to its list](#) of chemicals known to cause cancer.

Monsanto has worked hard to promote the use of glyphosate as a safe way to protect “native” species by removing “invasive” or “alien” species — the top reason for its use in Madison’s conservation areas. [Monsanto PR materials call glyphosate “as safe as table salt.”](#)

The [U.S. Right to Know campaign](#)’s WikiLeaks-style document dump in March revealed that EPA’s approval of glyphosate was in part based on studies “ghost-written” by Monsanto showing that the chemical did not have significant health effects. Further, American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) model legislation has become Wisconsin state statute, stating that local governments “may not prohibit the use of or otherwise regulate pesticides.”

Monsanto and other pesticide manufacturers are laughing all the way to the bank. Madisonians might want to connect the dots here.

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