

Spray

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moth, an invasive pest that, if left untreated, could have devastating effects on Central Coast agriculture, according to state officials.

The state believes the aerial applications of the synthetic pheromone will disrupt the mating cycle of the moths by confusing the males to the point where there's a crash in the population. But many residents have opposed the state's tactics because the long-term health effects of the pesticide, CheckMate LBAM-F, manufactured by the Bend, Ore.-based Suterra LLC, are unknown.

The state's eradication efforts have been the subject of lawsuits, three court hearings, numerous town hall meetings and rallies that became a common sight on the weekends in Santa Cruz, a town that takes pride in its environmental awareness and organic lifestyle.

County Supervisor Neal Coonerty, who represents Santa Cruz and pushed for the county to file suit against the state, said he was relieved more problems weren't reported but still doesn't agree with the state's decision to spray residents without environmental review.

Because the moth's presence was considered an emergency, state officials earlier this year waived the environmental studies that would normally take place

before spraying could occur.

"In one sense I'm relieved that there seems to be a limited amount of people from Santa Cruz County who were affected by the spraying," Coonerty said. "But to me, it's a serious public policy issue that you don't spray things on people without telling them exactly what's in it and testing it ahead of time."

Coonerty said he knew of one constituent who said she felt uncomfortable leaving her name and personal information with the state, and wondered if that stopped other residents from leaving more detailed reports.

In the county's Environmental Health Department, program manager Jerry Lemoine said his office received a number of health complaints after the

spraying. However, he said, they also received a number of complaints on an evening that the planned spraying had been canceled.

"There were a significant number of calls on one evening and the next morning of people reporting they were ill from the spraying, and the spraying didn't happen that night," Lemoine said.

"There's going to be general sore throats in the community anyway," Lemoine said. "If it coincides with after the spraying, some people will think the spraying brought it on, as opposed to natural viruses."

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