

Moth

Continued from Page A1

told the crowd of about 50 people who gathered in Burdick's courtroom in hopes of hearing that the spraying would be stopped.

Many residents were angered by the judge's decision.

"In a day and age where chemicals are known to cause all sorts of health problems, it's a tragedy that we're going to be doused with a concoction that nobody still knows anything about," said David Lommen, a Santa Cruz resident. "The only way we're going to find out whether it's bad or not is 10 years later — after it's too late and when people start to get cancer."

The state plans to first spray parts of North Monterey County on Sunday — in Salinas, Prunedale and Royal Oaks. There, the spraying plan has been reduced to 22.35 square miles, down from the originally planned 39.61 square-mile treatment, according to the state.

In the ensuing nights through Friday, the planes will make their way to Santa Cruz County, where 41.5 square miles from Aptos to Scotts Valley will be treated.

Since similar spraying began on the Monterey Peninsula in September, residents have opposed the aerial spraying because nobody,

State public outreach and response programs

■ A Web site with information about the moth, which can be found at www.cdffa.ca.gov/LBAM.

■ An e-mail subscription service with real-time information.

■ An e-mail and phone hot line to log health complaints to be monitored daily: LBAM@cdffa.ca.gov, [800] 491-1899 ext. 0. The hot line will log health complaints, which will be compiled and analyzed by a medical toxicologist. Complaints could be forwarded to the local county agricultural commissioner for investigation or the county public health officer.

■ Fact sheets addressing health and science issues are being developed for distribution and posting on the Web site.

■ Community meetings have been set and mailers sent to all homes in the affected communities.

■ Aerial treatment maps will be posted on the Web site showing the previous night's spray path. The maps will present a schematic showing each 100-foot wide path the planes make. Each pass will receive a single spray of treatment; nozzles are turned on and off using a computerized system guided by GPS technology.

■ E-mail updates to subscribers announcing intended areas of treatment, weather permitting. The morning after the treatment, follow-up e-mails will be sent to subscribers with results of the applications. E-mails will include a link to a map showing the progress of the treatment. Those interested in receiving e-mail updates may sign up at: http://www.cdffa.ca.gov/phpps/PDEP/lbam/lbam_main.html

SOURCE: California Department of Agriculture

not even scientists, knows what kind of health effects the pesticide, CheckMate LBAM-F, is capable of having on people.

On the Monterey Peninsula, more than 100 residents reported they became sick from a simi-

lar pesticide, CheckMate OLR-F, which the state sprayed over Carmel, Marina and Seaside in September.

The respiratory illnesses, which included wheezing, coughing and bouts of asthma, figured

prominently in a lawsuit filed by a Carmel group, Helping Our Peninsula's Environment. HOPE contended the state should have conducted an environmental assessment before it began spraying, but the state maintained that it didn't have to conduct one because the presence of the moth was an "emergency" and that time was of essence.

The Department of Food and Agriculture has said the moth is capable of causing as much as \$640 million in crop damage annually if left unchecked.

The Santa Cruz County Agricultural Commissioner's Office, however, has reported no known damage to crops so far.

A Monterey County judge halted the spraying Oct. 10 so that the ingredients in the pesticide, CheckMate OLR-F, could be studied further. But the judge, Robert A. O'Farrell, lifted the ban Oct. 18, saying HOPE failed to prove that the residents fell ill due to the pesticide.

Santa Cruz County attorneys had been hoping for a repeat of Monterey County's case, if only temporarily. Now some Santa Cruz County residents say they

are gearing up to leave town when the planes arrive.

"I have multiple chemical sensitivity and hyperactive airways," said Annie Spurgeon, a Santa Cruz resident who said she was exposed to a chemical in the workplace 15 years ago and hasn't felt the same since. "I need fresh air."

The state, however, has said repeatedly the pesticide is safe — and that it is odorless. Designed to replicate the scent of a female moth, the pesticide confuses the male moths, thus disrupting the mating process. The state has referred to the spraying program "as one of the safest in the history of California."

As proof of its safety, state officials have pointed to Australia, where the moth is a native and where a similar pesticide has been used for at least a decade with no adverse health effects.

But opponents have said those aerial applications took place in rural settings, not urban ones, and that a decade is not enough time to know whether the chemicals pose a danger.

Registered by the EPA and considered low in toxicity, the pair of pesticides, LBAM-F and OLR-

F, are made by Bend, Ore.-based Suterra LLC., which has equally come under fire by residents for refusing to disclose the ingredients of the pesticides.

While the company has said the ingredients are a trade secret and has petitioned the courts to keep them secret, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger ordered the state to release the ingredients of CheckMate LBAM-F on Oct. 20.

Lori Cioffi, a Santa Cruz resident, was calling on people to mobilize and get ready for the spraying by collecting samples of it after it falls to the ground.

"Document! Document! Document!" she yelled after the court hearing. "If anybody feels like they're getting sick, make sure you make your claims."

Although the county lost the bid for the temporary restraining order, Heath said the county lawsuit will still press on.

"We lost the battle, but not the war," he said.

The county could appeal Thursday's decision but has not indicated whether it will do so.

Contact Tom Ragan at tragan@santacruzsentinel.com.