

# Santa Cruz officials are worried about gypsy moth spraying plan

By JOAN RAYMOND  
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SANTA CRUZ — City officials have joined Supervisor Joe Cucchiara and San Lorenzo Valley Water District directors in sounding an alarm about a state plan to eradicate gypsy moths by spraying the insecticide, carbaryl, over 175 acres of Felton.

Santa Cruz Water Department Director Morris Allen maintains ground spraying of carbaryl should be used only as a "last resort" by the state Department of Food and Agriculture for its gypsy moth eradication program, scheduled to begin in the spring.

Allen is worried the spraying of carbaryl could pollute the San Lorenzo River, a major source of drinking water for customers served by the Santa Cruz Water Department.

If carbaryl must be used, states Allen in a report to the City Council, its use should be limited and carefully controlled. A strict program should prevent pollution of waterways, he said.

Local public agencies should be notified five days in advance before there is any application of the insecticide, said Allen.

Allen has recommended the City Council tell state officials to use carbaryl only "as a last resort" and only after "a thorough determination has been made that no other measure can achieve eradication" of the gypsy moth larvae.

The gypsy moth caterpillar hatches in the spring and voraciously munches leaves on a wide variety of plants and trees. The discovery of seven moths over a nine-square-mile area of Felton last summer was enough to worry agricultural officials about the potential for widespread defoliation.

State officials plan to spray carbaryl (commonly known as Sevin) over 175 acres of Felton. Additionally, a 250-acre overlapping area will be sprayed from the air by helicopters with the non-chemical compound, *Bacillus thuringiensis*, also known as Bt.

Allen has recommended biological control with Bt be used before the state Agriculture Department considers using toxins such as carbaryl.

State officials plan to go through the process of re-registering carbaryl so that it can be used in the 1985 moth eradication program.

They are expected to delay a decision on re-registration until Dec. 21 to allow time for public comments to be submitted, although no public hearing has been set.

Mayor Mardi Wormhoudt said today she expects the council to follow Allen's recommendation at a council meeting on Tuesday.

She said the use of carbaryl poses "a serious threat" to the water supply. The mayor said state officials are "over-reacting" to the discovery of the moths last summer.

The battle between state and local officials is reminiscent of the fights in 1981 over the state's Mediterranean fruit fly eradication program. The state won that battle and went ahead with a malathion-spraying program. Since that time, officials say there has only been one reported fruit fly appearance on the California scene — a bug was found recently in Beverly Hills.

State officials have said proclaimed the "Medfly War" as victory on the side of farmers.

Last week, the SLV Water District Board of Directors agreed to recommend the use of Bt over carbaryl, and to urge the use of other alternatives to carbaryl.

State Assemblyman Sam Farr, D-Carmel, has said he will lobby state officials on behalf of local officials to only use carbaryl.

Allen said Bt alone has not commonly been used as an eradication technique. In one try in 1983 in San Diego, Allen said the use of Bt by itself failed to prevent re-appearance of the moth the following year.

The largest number of moths in the 1984 state monitoring program were found in

Felton, said Allen.

As a result, the Gypsy Moth Science Advisory Panel has recommended the spray program to the state Agriculture Department.

But one member of the advisory panel, Donald Dahlsten, gave a minority opinion, recommended the use of Bt only. He said "Bt appears to be as efficacious as carbaryl and is certainly less hazardous to humans and the environment."

An analysis by Allen and his staff has shown carbaryl has a "half-life" of seven to nine days in the soil and one to five days in the water under conditions prevalent in the river. A half-life is the time it takes for half the amount of the substance to degenerate.

Allen said flowing water contains suspended particles of soils which adhere to bacterial populations which consume carbaryl. This helps to cause the breakdown of the chemical into non-toxic forms, he said.

# Moth spray decision is final

By KEITH MURAOKA  
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FELTON — The state's controversial decision to spray 250 acres here in March to eradicate the gypsy moth is final — no matter how many complaints are lodged and by whom.

"There are no ifs, ands or buts, our decision to spray Felton is final," Gera Curry, public information officer for the California Department of Food and Agriculture gypsy moth eradication program, told The Sentinel this morning.

She maintained the threat of the gypsy moth — whose voracious caterpillar hatches in spring and has the potential for wide-spread defoliation — far exceeds the state's planned cure.

That cure involves ground spraying with the insecticide carbaryl over 175 acres in downtown Felton. Additionally, a 250-acre overlapping area will be aerially sprayed with a non-chemical compound known as *Bacillus thuringiensis*.

Curry's word flies in the face of outcry from city and county officials.

The Santa Cruz City Council is scheduled tonight to pass recommendations from Santa Cruz Water Department Director Morris Allen, which urges the state to use carbaryl only "as a last resort." A similar resolution was approved by directors of the San Lorenzo Valley Water District last week.

Fifth (San Lorenzo-Scotts Valley) District Supervisor Joe Cucchiara and state Assemblyman Sam Farr, D-Carmel Valley, both have sent letters to the state urging the use of other alternatives to carbaryl.

Both Cucchiara and Santa Cruz Mayor Mardi Wormhoudt have said they are hopeful the state may rethink its position if there is a significant outcry of public opposition. Both have compared the use of carbaryl to kill gypsy moths as equivalent to using nuclear weapons.

Carbaryl, also known as Sevin, is a commonly used "over-the-counter" insecticide. State officials maintain Bt alone will not eradicate the pest, and that the unusual terrain and tree canopy of the Valley necessitates the two-pronged attack.

California Department of Food and Agriculture spokesman Dr. Isi Siddiqui repeatedly has said there is "absolutely no risk" involved to human health with the state's plan. In 13 other sprayings by the state against gypsy moths, not a single health-originated complaint has risen, he added.

What concerns local officials most is that carbaryl may pollute surface water supplies in the Valley.

Dr. John Connell, area manager for the state's plan, maintained that can't happen. He said carbaryl will not be sprayed within 50 feet of groundwater. He also said spraying would not occur if it is windy and there is any chance of spray drift over waterways.

Curry told The Sentinel that the state has an "obvious lesson to learn" from Lane County, Ore. Only one gypsy moth was found there two years ago and four more last year. This year 19,000 moths have invaded a 550-square-mile area there. "It is our feeling that it is much

cheaper, more convenient and less of a hassle in the long run to jump on the problem fast while the problem is still small," said Curry. "Our plan actually means we'll be using only pounds of insecticide now rather than tons later."

The state will be using carbaryl at a rate of one pound per 100 gallons of water — five to seven times less than what home gardeners use, according to Dr. Peter Kurtz, medical coordinator of the state's plan. He said the concentration used in dog

flea collars is considerably stronger than the state's concentration.

Whatever the concentration, Cucchiara feels the state shouldn't be in the position of "pushing insecticides." State officials disagree they are pushing insecticide use.

The discovery of seven moths over a nine-square-mile area in Felton last summer prompted the state's spray plan.

An informational-only meeting will be held in Felton sometime in January, according to Curry. The meeting will not be held for the purpose of debating the state's plan, she added.

SANTA CRUZ SENTINEL  
December 11, 1984

## Council registers concerns over gypsy moth spraying

SANTA CRUZ — City Council members Tuesday officially registered their environmental concerns over the state Department of Food and Agriculture's plan to spray Felton this spring with an insecticide to kill the leaf-eating gypsy moth caterpillar.

Although the council has no control over the state program, council members unanimously voted to urge the use of biological pest control over the use of the toxic chemical, carbaryl.

Santa Cruz Water Department Director Morris Allen has said the use of carbaryl poses a pollution threat to the San Lorenzo River, a major drinking water source for customers served by the Water Department. He has suggested the use of carbaryl "only as a last resort," particularly since the spraying could continue for several seasons.

The so-called Gypsy Moth Eradication Program calls for carbaryl ground spraying over 175 acres and air spraying of an overlapping 250 acres with the non-chemical compound, *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt).

DFA regional manager John Connell said carbaryl would not be sprayed within 50 feet of the river and of Fall Creek. He said Bull Creek — a stream that runs part of the year — could be covered with a tarp to prevent pesticide contamination.

Connell said the carbaryl use will be "so specific" there will be "no direct con-

tamination of water." The 50-foot boundaries will be added protection to the water, he said.

"Any chance of exposure is too much," said Mayor Mardi Wormhoudt.

Connell said state officials would work with the county Health Department and local water officials to monitor the spraying "to be sure there is no residue in the water."

Councilwoman Katy Sears-Williams wanted to know if the city would be liable should something go wrong with the program.

"All I want to know is who pays?" Sears-Williams asked Connell.

Connell said state officials would work with local officials on a plan to decide what should be done in the case of "extreme emergency."

Sears-Williams said she was "very disappointed the state does not have some policy for an emergency."

Details of a monitoring program will be worked out with local water officials, said Connell.

Seven moths were found in Felton last summer — the largest single concentration of the bug in the state this year, according to agricultural officials.

The caterpillar hatches in the spring and eats leaves from a variety of trees and shrubs, posing a threat of massive defoliation.

SANTA CRUZ SENTINEL  
December 12, 1984