

DATE: February 10, 2021  
TO: Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation & Forestry  
Megan Patterson, Director of the Board of Pesticides Control  
FROM: Samantha Warren, UMS Director of Government & Community Relations  
RE: **Report on Use of Funds Provided By P.L. 2019, Chapter 243**

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For more than three decades, University of Maine Cooperative Extension has provided science-based pesticides safety education and outreach through a memorandum of understanding with the Board of Pesticides Control (BPC). Maine's pesticides safety program is recognized as a national leader, in part because of this long-standing partnership that the BPC supports with an annual \$65,000 grant to UMaine Extension.

In 2019, the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation & Forestry and ultimately the full Legislature supported LD 1273, which clarified the funding arrangement and created flexibility that would allow for expanding funding and the scope of work.

As part of our commitment to public accountability and transparency, the university made a friendly amendment to that bill (which became P.L. 2019, Chapter 243) creating an annual requirement to report to both the BPC and this Committee about our funded activities of the prior year. This serves as the first report.

Supported by the \$65,000 BPC funding, UMaine Extension employs a pesticide safety expert as part of its larger Pest Management Unit. This professional writes and regularly updates the Maine-specific pesticide application manuals that guides those seeking to become licensed in how to appropriately apply pesticides in a way that minimizes impacts to public and environmental health while preserving the quality and quantity of the crop being treated. In the past year, several applicator training manuals have been developed or revised, including those pertaining to vegetable pesticide application (private), microbial pest control (commercial) and non-soil/structural fumigation (private and commercial), with revisions of others in progress.

The BPC-supported pesticide safety expert also provided multiple in-person and virtual trainings, including applicator recertification trainings in Orono, Brewer, Portland and at the Agricultural Trades Show in Augusta (2020) and online (2021). Topics ranged from browntail moth management to ticks and mosquitos and allowed participants to earn between one and four credits per course. In the past year, online training videos with corresponding recertification quizzes on ticks and invasive plant management were also released. In total, nearly 500 individuals took advantage of our online recertification opportunities in 2020 and more than 1,500 individuals participated in trainings offered last month as part of the online 2021 Ag Trade Show. All applicator manuals were also digitalized and can now be purchased through UMaine Extension's website.

Offering online synchronous and video trainings for potential and licensed applicators was not the only way UMaine Extension's pesticides safety education and outreach program adapted

during the COVID-19 pandemic. As traffic to Extension's website soared during the pandemic thanks to innovative initiatives like the online farm and seafood directory or Farmer Zooms, the pesticide safety expert transitioned a number of printed documents online and created new web-based content to serve new audiences and emerging needs for public information. For example, pages were added about disinfectant safety, pesticide use at home and respirators, and the expert assisted with editing content on integrated pest management for the Plant Something Maine awareness campaign website. The pesticide safety expert also has helped restructure the pesticides portion of the Master Gardener program delivered by UMaine Extension across the state and contributed content to the Maine Home Garden News.

The new methods of education and outreach utilized during the pandemic to respond to changing needs of both commercial and home users were possible in part thanks to the flexibility allowed by P.L., Chapter 243. We are proud of the ways the pesticides safety education and outreach program and Cooperative Extension continues to bring university research and technical assistance to tens of thousands of Maine homes, businesses, farms and communities each year. We look forward to continued collaboration with the BPC and the ACF Committee in 2021.