



For Immediate Release: September 15, 2009

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Hamilton Township Announces Township Parks are “Pesticide Free Zones”, Residents can do likewise in their own homes and yards

Hamilton Twp, NJ— “The “green” movement is sprouting throughout the NJ, with towns like Hamilton joining in the sustainability movement by taking steps to reduce their impact on the environment and conserve energy and water resources. Already a leader in recycling, enforcing “no idling”, building energy conservation, green purchasing and purchasing clean fuel vehicles, Hamilton is now adding “Pesticide Free Parks” to its sustainability portfolio.

Responding to the request of local members of the NJ Environmental Federation, Hamilton Township passed a resolution tonight adopting the Federation’s model pesticide reduction policy. This policy will designate certain public properties in Hamilton Township, such as Veterans Park and numerous other tot lots and parks as "Pesticide Free Zones", and establishes “least toxic” pest management strategies for all township buildings and grounds

Hamilton Mayor John F. Bencivengo endorsed the policy as a great way to educate the public about pesticide use, and insure that the township continues on its path of “pesticide free zones” in its parks, municipal building and library. Schools in New Jersey are already required by law to follow Integrated Pest Management plans, using non toxic methods first, and conventional pesticides only if the non toxic methods were ineffective.

“It is easy to manage a lawn/landscape without harmful chemical pesticides used to kill weeds and insects,” according to Jane Nogaki, program coordinator for the NJ Environmental Federation. Cost effective and environmental friendly alternatives to pesticides include: hand pulling weeds; mulching areas properly to prevent weeds; planting native plants that do not attract insects; reducing or eliminating lawns to cut down on the need for watering; fertilizing; and mowing.

Many scientific studies indicate that pesticides threaten the public’s health by increasing the risk of cancer, learning disabilities, asthma, birth defects, kidney disease and other ailments. These chemicals can also poison animals, pollute local streams and rivers and seep through the ground into our underground aquifers. Every body of water tested in NJ has evidence of pesticide contamination, according to a study by the US Geological Survey. Children are especially sensitive and vulnerable because of their rapid development and behavior patterns. Currently New Jersey uses about 4 million pounds of pesticides annually for lawn care, mosquito control, agricultural production, and golf course maintenance.

Hamilton Township would join 31 other communities in New Jersey which have designated Pesticide Free Zones in parks including Burlington and Cape May Counties, and the townships of Bernards, Chatham, Cherry Hill, Collingswood, Asbury Park, East and West Windsor, Hightstown, Montclair, Ocean City, Dennis, Colts Neck, Hazlet, Neptune, Red Bank, Pine Beach and Wall Townships.

“The New Jersey Environmental Federation is extremely pleased that Hamilton is adopting this important environmental resolution,” Nogaki said. “These safe practices will protect all Township residents, including children who play in the parks.

“We also need residents to do their part in reducing pesticides in our environment and keeping our air, water and land safe from toxic chemicals,” said Nogaki. “Residents can participate by making their own property a “Pesticide Free Zone.”

Non-toxic lawn care tips and “Pesticide Free Zone” ladybug logo yard signs are available from www.cleanwateraction.org/njef or www.pesticidefreelawns.org. For more information about how your school or town can adopt Pesticide Free Zones, contact Jane Nogaki, 856-767-1110 or email Janogaki@cleanwater.org. Natural methods of pest control are also available from Master Gardeners of Mercer County at 609-989-6853, Web Site: www.mgofmc.org

A list of organic landscapers is available at www.nofanj.org/OrganicLawnandLandCareFinalList2006.htm

About the New Jersey Environmental Federation

The New Jersey Environmental Federation, the NJ Chapter of Clean Water Action, (www.cleanwateraction.org/njef) has been empowering people for more than 36 years to take action to protect America’s waters, the health of our families and to make democracy work.

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