

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release: **Contact: Eric Benson, NJEF, 908-510-0196**
Thursday, April 1, 2010 **James McGowan, South Orange Env. Comm. 973-327-4287**
 Janine Bauer, Village Trustee, 917- 916- 8972

South Orange Declares Parks, Playgrounds, and Fields as “Pesticide Free Zones”

South Orange, NJ—The environmentally friendly ladybug is alive and well at Meadowlands Park, thanks to a South Orange Village policy that declares parks and playgrounds as “Pesticide Free Zones.”

According to **Tom Riordan, Chair of the South Orange Environmental Commission**, the integrated pest management policy for the township identifies key sensitive areas like the village parks to be managed without harmful chemical pesticides. Integrated pest management (IPM) calls for the management of insects, undesired plants, and plant diseases with tools that are least likely to impact human health or the environment.

“South Orange supports the pesticide-free park initiative, and has been managing its parks for several years without pesticides,” said **Village President Douglas Newman**.

“South Orange’s action reinforces the Village’s commitment to protecting parks and open spaces and reducing its pesticide use,” said **Eric Benson, Canvas Director, NJ Environmental Federation (NJEF)**. “Since IPM is now the law on all New Jersey school grounds, it makes perfect sense to try to expand it to all public property as well. We’re here today to help spread the word and to encourage individual homeowners to consider reducing or eliminating their own pesticide use.”

Village Trustee Janine Bauer noted that South Orange achieved Sustainable Jersey™ Certification in 2009, and continually is looking for ways to expand the reach of sustainability to all aspects of township programs and departments. And, Integrated Pest Management is a Sustainable Jersey Grounds & Maintenance Action for Sustainable Communities. “I am pleased that when residents and visitors use our parks, they will not be exposed to pesticides. That was always important to me when my children were small. Next, we’ll work on indoor spaces,” said Trustee Bauer.

The Township South Orange Village joins 32 other communities, and is one of two communities in Essex County, which have designated Pesticide Free Zones in parks including Chatham, East and West Windsor, Hazlet, Irvington, Newark, Manasquan, Ocean City, Pine Beach, Wall, Wood Ridge, Upper Saddle River and the County of Burlington.

Many scientific studies indicate that pesticides threaten the public’s health by increasing the risk of cancer, learning disabilities, asthma, birth defects, and reproductive problems.. These chemicals can also poison animals, pollute local streams and rivers and seep through the ground into 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.

“We especially want to protect children because they are closer to pesticide applications on the ground, and they are still developing and absorb more pesticides than adults,” said **Benson**.

Fortunately, alternatives exist that are cost effective and friendly to the environment, simple things like hand pulling weeds, mowing at a height of 3 inches to shade out weeds, mulching areas properly to prevent weeds, planting native plants that don't get insect problems, and reducing or eliminating lawns to cut down on the need for watering, fertilizing and mowing.

“We need residents to do their part in reducing pesticides in our environment and keeping our air, water and land safe from toxic chemicals,” said **James McGowan, member of the South Orange Environmental Commission** who brought the PFZ resolution to the attention of the town elected officials. “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. For more information, visit <http://www.cleanwateraction.org/programinitiative/pesticides-free-campaign> or contact Jane Nogaki, NJEF's Pesticides Campaign Coordinator at 856-767-1110 or janogaki@cleanwater.org. Natural methods of pest control are also available from Master Gardeners of Essex County, 973-228-2210

The New Jersey Environmental Federation (NJEF) is a non-profit 501(c)(4) organization fighting to protect natural resources and clean up pollution in New Jersey. NJEF is the New Jersey chapter of Clean Water Action. NJEF receives research and educational support from Clean Water Fund (CWF), a national non-profit organization. For more information, visit www.cleanwateraction.org/njef or www.cleanwaterfund.org.

Press Conference attendees:

WHO: Douglas Newman, South Orange President of Village Trustees
Janine Bauer, South Orange Village Trustee
Eric Benson, Canvass Director, NJ Environmental Federation
Tom Riordan, Chair, South Orange Environmental Commission
James McGowan, Member, South Orange Environmental Commission
Kate Schmidt, Acting Director of Recreation and Cultural Affairs (invited)
Mario Luciani, Director of Public Works, including Parks (invited)

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