

THIS WEEK'S BUSINESS FOCUS



PESTICIDE ACTION NETWORK OF BLAINE COUNTY (PAN BC)

www.pesticideactionnetwork.net

When you think of the bucolic setting of one of the valley's many pristine parks, you presume reasonable measures have been taken to keep your kids safe, so that all you have to do is kiss boo boos after they fall.

Sad truth is, that many of the valley's public spaces rely on toxic pesticides and other unsavory chemicals to control weeds and maintain turf areas.

But there's a coalition of more than 450 citizens and businesses comprising the Pesticide Action Network of Blaine County (PAN BC) that activated after learning that chemical pesticides—herbicides included—have serious negative health effects, especially in children and even pets.

"We are advocating for a community-wide plan to control and prevent weeds safely and protect kids at play," explains PAN BC Campaign Director Kathryn Goldman. "And we are also seeking stronger notification requirements when pesticides are in use on public property."

Children are more vulnerable to pesticides because their developing immune systems and small size expose them to higher relative doses of pesticides. Some of the detrimental health effects linked to pesticides are asthma, learning disabilities, birth defects, leukemia, brain and breast cancer and hormone disruption. Pesticide pollutants can also penetrate soils and seep into water sources.

Sounds formidable, but PAN BC and its members are not content just to complain about the problem. In addition to a heavy campaign to educate the public, the group has a plan for implementing the necessary changes for the future.

After studying what other communities across the nation have done, PAN BC started

by crafting an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) policy, which prioritizes non-chemical weed and pest control and directs land managers to use chemical methods only as a last resort. The group is targeting public spaces children use heavily.

PAN BC's goal is to eliminate the use of toxic chemical pesticides such as 2,4-D, Atrazine, and others for weed and pest control in valley parks and schools and on the Wood River Trail by the end of 2011. The group has been making impressive progress. The City of Ketchum passed its policy for the IPM in city parks earlier this year. The group will take the IPM policy to all the Wood River Valley local governments for adoption this summer. PAN BC also recently crafted a partnership with the Blaine County Recreation District to run a three-year pilot project using goats to control weeds on the local bike path, stretching from Bellevue to Ketchum. Managed by an outside contractor, the goats will eat the weeds over a six week period each year, eliminating the need for toxic chemicals.

PAN BC's website is a wealth of information on how to go chemical free in parks and yards.

"Our community is poised for change," says Goldman. "With the right tools and information, cities, landscaping companies and homeowners can meet this challenge."

—Jennifer Liebrum

VITALS

YEARS OF SERVICE: **1**
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