

# PESTICIDE PROGRAM UPDATE

By William Cooke

AUDUBON NEW YORK has initiated a program that focuses on the aesthetic use of pesticides in Westchester, Nassau and Suffolk Counties in New York State. The program disseminates science-based information on pesticides with respect to their limitations and impacts on the residents of these counties. Additionally, a reduction in the use of lawn care pesticides is encouraged.



Each year commercial applicators and homeowners use tons of pesticides. Thousands of New Yorkers rely on commercial lawn care companies to treat their properties each spring, trusting the companies to use safe products. Thousands more homeowners buy and apply lawn care chemicals with the belief that chemicals available on the market must be safe. These assumptions are clearly misconceptions.

The United States Environmental Protection Agency agrees that the use of pesticides is not without risks. Scientists are now gaining an understanding of the impacts both to the ecosystem and human health. Many of the commonly used lawn care pesticides present a very real health risk. According to a nationally renowned wildlife pathologist, Ward Stone, the legal application of many of these

chemicals will result in the deaths of birds and other wildlife. There is also growing information on the impacts to domestic pets and children.

No individual would intentionally put his or her pets or children's health at risk for a more beautiful lawn. Audubon New York believes that as people learn the truth about the impacts of pesticides, they will make different choices.

The information made available about pesticides has been limited to the advertisements produced by chemical companies that make the harmful products. One memorable advertisement begins with a man standing on his lawn saying, "My lawn has no bugs." This may be true, but what is omitted is the threat to drinking water, human and animal life. Audubon's initiative focuses on eliminating the aesthetic use of pesticides for lawn care and does not

address agricultural use or where there is a danger to public health.

Audubon New York encourages all New Yorkers to re-examine their chemical use and switch to organic means for lawn care. A healthy green beautiful lawn can be achieved without killing birds and other wildlife by using non-toxic alternatives. Contract with commercial applicators that use non-toxic alternatives. If a company downplays concern of pesticide use or refuses to utilize non-toxic alternatives, consider switching companies. Commercial applicators must reveal the dangers of pesticides or they are breaking the law and should be reported to the office of the attorney general of New York State. For more from information on pesticides and non-toxic alternatives go to <http://ny.audubon.org>.

## PCBs and The Hudson River A Step In the Right Direction

By William Cooke

RECENTLY the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued a record of decision (ROD) regarding the clean up of the Hudson River. Within the ROD administrator Christine Todd Whitman ordered a cleanup of numerous hot spots north of the Troy Dam in the Hudson River. The projected cost of this cleanup is over \$400 million.

The decision is a significant victory for the conservation and environmental community but more importantly for the people of New York State and the Hudson River.

The General Electric Company (GE) continued its aggressive lobbying to persuade the EPA to insert unrealistic and unachievable performance standards into the ROD that would halt the clean-up process. However, administrator Whitman released a ROD that did not include the standards. Direct intervention and assistance of Governor George E. Pataki and efforts from numerous environmental and conservation groups figured prominently in this outcome.

The design and implementation phase is the next step in this pro-

cedure. After that process, which will be developed in no less than two years, the actual removal of PCBs should begin.

Once the process has started, cleanup of the Hudson should be complete in five to seven years. Cleanup will make an immense difference in the health of the upper river ecosystem and may mean that at some point in our children's lifetimes, it might once again be safe to enjoy all the gifts of the Hudson River. Audubon New York applauds this step in the right direction for the Hudson.



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YES! Please sign me up for the Audubon Advocate E-list.

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