

I. Project Description

A. Problem, Background, and Justification

Maryland has a diverse agricultural base requiring an array of pest management strategies to control a wide variety of pests. Pesticides and other pest management approaches have inherent risks and benefits. Both policy-makers and growers need information on the availability, reliability, advantages, and disadvantages of various approaches. It is essential that state and federal authorities be supplied with sound information in order to ensure that growers continue to have the safest and most effective tools and materials available to them. Increased public understanding of the real risks and benefits associated with pesticide use is critical to making informed decisions. Increasingly, EPA and USDA rely on State Network Projects (SNP) for fast, science-based input on pesticide-related decisions and other questions surrounding pest management.

The Maryland Pesticide Education and Assessment Program (MPEAP) has served since 1982 as the primary source for information on pesticide policy at the state and federal levels, as well as on use, usage, economic and social benefits, and economic, environmental, and health risks. From 2002 – 2007, a subunit of MPEAP known as the Maryland Information Network for Pesticides and Alternative Strategies (MINPAS), functioned as Maryland's SNP under a grant from the Northeastern IPM Center (NE IPMC). With the dissolution of the Mid-Atlantic network of SNPs, followed by foreshortened expectations by the granting agency of what SNPs are to accomplish, MINPAS was dissolved in late 2007 and its functions defaulted to MPEAP at large. MPEAP maintains long-established connections throughout Extension, as well as with state, local, and federal authorities, growers, consultants, and other stakeholders. MPEAP has an especially close tie with the Maryland Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Program. MPEAP will continue to serve as the link between the NE IPMC, the grower community, the land grant institution at large, Extension and state government programs on pesticides and IPM, and other key institutions, agencies, and organizations.

B. Objectives and Anticipated Impacts

1. Objective: Answer queries posed by federal regulatory agencies regarding the use of pesticides and other IPM tactics throughout Maryland. Impacts: Federal agencies will make informed decisions on pesticide policies and regulations. Maryland stakeholders will be able to plan for impending changes.
2. Objective: Help process, when necessary, subcontracts between the Northeastern IPM Center and other entities of the University of Maryland. Impact: Indirect costs will be minimized.

C. Approach and Procedures

MPEAP will serve as the primary information source for federal and state regulatory agencies and other agencies regarding use and usage of all IPM tactics, including pesticides, in all IPM settings throughout the state. MPEAP will consistently respond in a timely fashion to requests for information from these agencies. MPEAP will also process, when necessary,

subcontracts between the Northeastern IPM Center and other entities of the SNP leader's institution to minimize total indirect costs.

Upon receiving a request from NE IPMC or USDA for information about a particular pesticide used in the state, the MPEAP Coordinator will direct the request to appropriate experts in the state. Depending on the nature of the request, these experts will comprise state and county Extension specialists, agents, and educators; private consultants; state agency representatives; or other knowledgeable contacts. Experts will be requested to respond directly to the primary source, with a copy to the MPEAP Coordinator. Experts will also be asked to send a copy to intermediaries in the process, such as representatives of the NE IPMC, if expressly requested by the agency. At minimum, experts will be asked to indicate whether (1) the pesticide is not important to Maryland agriculture or other interests; (2) the pesticide may be important, but the expert is unable to provide a proper assessment within the given time frame; or (3) the individual does not have the expertise required to make an assessment of the pesticide's importance to Maryland agriculture or other interests.

The MPEAP Coordinator will be responsible for tracking progress and preparing a yearly report. A graduate student will assist in compiling responses to requests for information and in preparation of the annual report.

D. Evaluation Plan

For USDA and NE IPMC requests and responses processed, the number of experts responding compared to the number contacted will be the indicator of success.

II. Cooperation and Institutional Units Involved

The PEAP, IPM, and pesticide regulatory units in Maryland Cooperative Extension (MCE) and the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) will maintain close cooperation. Dr. Amy Brown, MPEAP Coordinator, will serve as liaison to the land grant institution and other key agencies in the state on pesticide issues. Approximately 10% of Dr. Brown's time will be devoted to this project.

IV. Collaborative Arrangements and Letters of Support

The MPEAP Coordinator will work with state and county Cooperative Extension faculty and staff and with representatives from the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA). This will involve responding to occasional requests for information on pesticide use, which is well within the normal range of activities and contacts between MCE and MDA; therefore, no letters of support are necessary.