



MEMORANDUM

DATE: May 13, 2019
FROM: Greg Harper
TO: Albemarle County Board of Supervisors
SUBJECT: Compliance with Safer Chemical Management Procedures

For the last few years and with the benefit of having additional staff and financial resources, the Environmental Services Division (ESD) has been more actively managing vegetation within stormwater facilities and on County-operated dams. The intent of these actions is to ensure vegetation does not hinder the function and integrity of the infrastructure – for instance, by blocking flow or heaving structures – and to control woody invasive vegetation (we are not attempting to control herbaceous vegetation).

Our contractor for this work is Wild Ginger Field Services, an environmental consulting firm that conducts ecologically-based field work. The basic vegetation management technique involves considerable mechanical work supplemented, as necessary, by the use of herbicides. Vegetation is first cut back and then an herbicide is sparingly and directly applied to the cut surfaces of trees, shrubs, and vines using a specialized applicator wand. We are not performing foliar (leaf) spraying.

We have coordinated with Wild Ginger to develop tailored vegetation management plans for each site and – as this is a relatively new undertaking – have adapted our techniques based on outcomes, and sometimes, public feedback. As an example, we have increased the visibility of signage to be certain that neighbors are aware of the treatments. This elevated awareness has precipitated approximately ten phone calls and emails to ESD staff. After explaining the purpose and scope of the treatments, citizen response has so far been either neutral or supportive.

Wild Ginger and ESD staff selected what we believe to be the most appropriate herbicides – based on effectiveness, environmental health, and public safety – and have since come to rely on one herbicide almost exclusively (glyphosate). We believe that glyphosate is the safest product that is effective for our applications.

It's important to note that, after a one to three-year period, the vegetation at our sites is stabilizing and we are able to continue management without herbicides. We have already reached this stabilization at the Key West and Monticello dams and at the Crozet Wetlands. Woodbrook Lagoons and the Church Road Basin should be stabilized by the end of this growing season. These achievements would not have been possible without the measured, careful use of herbicides.

As a final note, in closer review of the County's Safer Chemical Management Procedure (attached), ESD staff recognize that we have been over-enforcing the policy in issuing waivers for much of the work we have been doing. Section 3.B.2.a of the policy exempts using herbicides for the "treatment of stumps of woody invasive species".

ESD staff would be happy to receive feedback from Board members regarding how we currently implement our vegetation management program. We are similarly concerned about any use of chemicals in the environment and want to continue to improve the procedures and methods we use to achieve our broad program goals.