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Oregon Cities on the Move Towards Safer, Organic Land Care

Eugene, OR – Parks in Talent, Eugene, Lane County and Springfield, Oregon are on the move towards safer, organic land care. In order to provide city landscapers with the skills and information needed to transition parks from conventional to natural land care, Beyond Toxics, a statewide environmental justice organization is partnering with a national non-profit organization Beyond Pesticides to sponsor a series of workshops with renowned organic turf grass expert Chip Osborne. Workshops will be held in the Willamette and Rogue Valleys. More than nine local governments are sending park maintenance staff to learn about organic land care.

“By putting a focus on soil health, non-toxic, organic land care can lower the long-term costs of managing turf while maintaining the look and quality that land managers and residents expect,” said Mr. Osborne.

Natural land care employs a **“systems approach”** to turf management, which integrates three concepts: an understanding of the soil and its biomass; sound management techniques; and the use of natural, organic products.

Beyond Toxics is hosting a free Community Town Hall on Organic Land Care on Wednesday, September 18, 6:30-8:30 PM at the Talent Community Center (104 E Main St, Talent, Oregon 97540) in Jackson County. The event is co-hosted with Pollinator Project Rogue Valley. Come meet the experts, ask questions!

The cities of Eugene, Springfield, Talent and Lane County are participating in a 3-year pilot project to receive training and consultation for the transition to organic park management. Five other Oregon cities are receiving the initial training and may start the pilot project next spring.

Based upon an analysis of the structure, chemistry, and biology of the soil at the parks included in the project, Beyond Pesticides and Mr. Osborne will deliver a transition management plan to the community. This plan will help guide the use of new practices and products that support healthy soil, and turf grass that is better able to resist pest and weed pressure.

“These trainings provide many options for cities and counties that want to stop using carcinogens and neurotoxic chemicals where children and pets play,” said Lisa Arkin, Executive Director of Beyond Toxics. *“Protecting those who work in our parks, plus the families who rely on public parks for recreation and relaxation is paramount.”*

“With increased awareness of pesticide hazards, from the decline of pollinators to the World Health Organization recognizing the carcinogenic properties of the herbicide glyphosate, communities and residents are seeking out alternative products and practices that do not put human health or the environment at risk,” said Jay Feldman, executive director at Beyond Pesticides, an organization which advocates for alternatives to hazardous pesticides.

Beyond Pesticides stresses that it is unnecessary to use toxic pesticides in order to have beautiful lawns, parks and playing fields. These activities also protect local waterways from pesticide pollution.

Beyond Toxics promotes environmental justice engagement and community-based environmental grassroots organizing to ensure environmental protection and health for all communities.

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