



Application ID: 014
Less Toxic Landscapes – A Healthier Housatonic River

Dear Trustees:

Thank you for consideration of the Center for Ecological Technology's (CET) proposal to carry out education to target audiences (homeowners, facilities managers, municipalities, landscape professionals, retailers) through workshops, training, retail displays and social marketing techniques.

We appreciate your thoughtful review and evaluation and want to respond to a few specific points.

- **Criterion A3 (Sustainable Benefits):** CET agrees that behavior change requires sustained effort. For this reason, we believe that a three year program provides sufficient time and resources to be effective in inspiring, educating and facilitating behavior changes.
- **Criterion B1 (Technical/Technological Feasibility):** Public education is a critical strategy towards acceptance and implementation by the public (as stated by the reviewer). Individuals are purchasing many, many products for landscaping and gardening, the largest leisure activity in America. In the absence of regulation of homeowner and other “non-regulated applicators”, a multi-pronged program of education, training and social marketing techniques is needed to help transform common practices. Training sessions for landscape professionals are an extremely effective way to help them transform their practices. Local opportunities for IPM training are extremely limited and many more professionals would participate if professional quality training sessions were available with less time and travel expense. Public awareness and support is critical in shaping public policies, regulations and marketplace practices.
- **Criterion B4 (Measurable Results):** Quantifying the impact of educational activities (both short and long-term). The majority of resources requested have been allocated to providing education and training services. To conduct a rigorous evaluation consistent with research standards would require significant additional resources. The techniques proposed, while not definitive, will help CET and Trustees assess and modify project components and evaluate the overall effectiveness of this initiative. We understand the scoring for this component and hope that the reviewers will agree that the importance of carrying out these activities is essential to the overall effort to protect the Housatonic watershed.
- **Criterion D3: (Community Involvement):** CET's outreach and education will reach and involve the community at large including retailer stores (hardware stores, big box stores), municipalities, professional landscapers, neighborhood associations, garden clubs, Western MA Master Gardeners Association, environmental organizations,

business organizations, employers health care providers, and diverse community organizations.

We also appreciate the recommendation of the Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation Volunteer Task Force and would also like to respond briefly to the concerns they raised:

- Question about the level of chemical pesticide and fertilizer use by the target population: Every spring and throughout the summer, many, “pesticide flags” appear on lawns in Pittsfield neighborhoods, a strong indication that chemical pesticides and fertilizers are routinely applied to lawns.
- Question about the toxicity and persistence of chemicals used on lawns: Washington Toxics Coalition has conducted extensive research on this topic related to the salmon population. <http://watoxics.org/content/pdf/PoisonedWaters.pdf> . To our knowledge, the same level of research has not been conducted for fauna and flora along the Housatonic River and watershed. However, this brief excerpt from the Greenscapes website (www.greenscapes.org) in eastern Massachusetts partially responds to this question.

“Now consider the fertilizers, herbicides, insecticides and fungicides being used on our landscapes. Chemicals that are not immediately absorbed by plants in our landscapes can end up polluting our water through storm water runoff. Excess nutrients either leach through the soil to the groundwater, or they are washed by rain into storm drains that lead to the nearest water body, contaminating our drinking water and causing rapid alga growth in ponds and bays.”

In exploring ways to evaluate this program, such as testing the presence of chemicals in storm drains, we were advised that this method was challenging because many chemicals persist for years.

- Behavior changes will be difficult to monitor: (See above Criterion B4)

In addition to the brief comments above, attached is a letter to the editor printed in the Berkshire Eagle on June 22, 2006 that indicates public concern about the problem of chemical pesticides and fertilizers on lawns and gardens.

Once again, we appreciate your work and consideration of this project.

Laura Dubester
Director