



MARYLAND ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY



February 11, 2020

The Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee
SB 300 : Pesticides –Use of Chlorpyrifos—Prohibition
Position: Support

Dear Members of the Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee:

The Maryland Ornithological Society, American Bird Conservancy, and Maryland-DC Audubon support the House bill Pesticides –Use of Chlorpyrifos—Prohibition (no bill number as yet). Not only is Chlorpyrifos dangerous to human health, it is also toxic to birds and to freshwater, estuarine and marine organisms, honeybees and other wildlife. There is no way to use this pesticide safely.

The Environmental Protection Agency's 2016 Draft Biological Evaluation of Chlorpyrifos with reference to endangered species found that Chlorpyrifos was found "likely to adversely affect" 97 percent of all taxa, including 93 out of 110 bird species. Only five birds received a "no effects" determination, and this was based on the fact that these birds are already extinct. Chlorpyrifos was also found to affect 100 percent of the 30 designated Critical Habitats for birds.¹

Incident data confirm that Chlorpyrifos is lethal to birds. ABC's Avian Incident Monitoring System (AIMS) database includes 58 incidents implicating Chlorpyrifos, with deaths of at least 775 birds.² Many of the incidents involved hundreds of individuals, demonstrating that Chlorpyrifos is extremely hazardous to birds. These data reinforce the serious findings of EPA's draft biological evaluation.

¹ Environmental Protection Agency, Biological Evaluation Chapters for Chlorpyrifos ESA Assessment, update January 18, 2017, <https://www.epa.gov/endangered-species/biological-evaluation-chapters-chlorpyrifos-esa-assessment>

² American Bird Conservancy, Avian Incident Monitoring System (data from 1960s through 2005).

Birds can be poisoned by several means, most notably seed treatments and granular applications to soil, which birds can mistake for grit. Application of mosquito adulticides can cause mortality and reproductive effects as well.³ There are also indirect impacts by poisoning the invertebrate base on which many bird species rely for food.

A study published in the peer-reviews journal Nature in November, 2017 showed that wild songbirds consuming just eight Chlorpyrifos granules per day over three days could suffer impaired condition, migration delays and improper migratory direction, which could lead to increased risk of mortality or lost breeding opportunity.⁴

In conclusion, MOS, American Bird Conservancy, and Maryland-DC Audubon applaud the efforts of the Maryland legislature in addressing this deadly pesticide. We urge you to pass SB 300 to protect people, birds and other wildlife in Maryland and beyond.

Sincerely,

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³ Environmental Protection Agency (2016). Draft Biological Evaluation for Chlorpyrifos, Chlorpyrifos Registration Review Docket EPA-HQ-OPP-2008-0850.

⁴ Eng, Margaret L., et al, Imidacloprid and chlorpyrifos insecticides impair migratory ability in a seed-eating songbird, Nature, 9 November 2017.
<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-017-15446-x.epdf>