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SENT VIA EMAIL

April 8, 2026

Kim Konte
Founder, Executive Director
Non-Toxic Neighborhoods

Re: San Juan Capistrano Progressive Pest Management Program

Dear Ms. Konte:

Thank you for your continued interest in the City's Progressive Pest Management Program ("PPMP"). This letter responds to your recent emails regarding that program.

As you are aware, the PPMP provides guidance for pesticide use at City parks, facilities and other City-maintained properties. The program does not prohibit pesticide use. Instead, it establishes a progressive approach that prioritizes non-chemical and organic measures, while allowing pesticide use when those alternatives are ineffective or would result in economic impacts. The PPMP also includes requirements related to public notification, recordkeeping and reporting.

In response to the concerns raised in your emails, the City Manager's Office conducted a review of how the PPMP has been implemented since it was established in 2018. That review found that the program has not been applied consistently at City-maintained areas, with the exception of City trails, where pesticides are not used as part of regular maintenance activities. For other City-maintained areas, available records were insufficient to determine the specific nature and extent of pest management practices each time pesticides were used, or whether the landscape maintenance contractor consistently followed the prioritized approach outlined in the PPMP.

In June 2025, the City Council awarded a new landscape maintenance contract following a competitive procurement process. The PPMP was incorporated into that agreement. Since the contract was approved, City staff has worked with the contractor to significantly limit pesticide use. However, recordkeeping related to pesticide application has continued to be inconsistent.

The City's review highlighted the need for improved communication and coordination – both internally and with the landscape maintenance contractor – regarding pest management practices. To address this, staff from the City Manager's Office will be working with the Public Works Department to develop improved internal systems for consistent documentation and reporting.

You also requested information regarding recent work conducted in a City-owned portion of San Juan Creek. That work was part of an environmental mitigation project to stabilize the creek bank. The City's contractors, WSP Engineering Services and ECORP Environmental Consulting Services, used manual labor and non-organic pesticides pursuant to approved resource-agency permits. In addition, the City contracts with a third-party conservation district to remove *Arundo* from the creeks on an annual basis. This work is performed using manual removal methods, with non-organic pesticides applied to control new growth under permits held by the County of Orange.

Finally, staff is in the process of gathering documents responsive to your Public Records Act request. Responsive records, including the permits referenced above, will be provided through the City Clerk's Office. We anticipate releasing the first batch of documents on Monday, April 13.

Thank you again for bringing these matters to our attention.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Benjamin Siegel". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Benjamin" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Siegel".

Benjamin Siegel
City Manager