

NEWTON PARKS, RECREATION & CULTURE DEPARTMENT

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May 2024

To the Neighbors of Weeks Field:

As abutters to one of Newton's athletic fields, we want you to know in advance that the Newton Parks, Recreation and Culture Department will be applying herbicides to a portion of the athletic fields at Weeks Field (Paul St side only) between the dates of June 22, 2024 – July 7, 2024. An abutter is defined as someone whose property is within 300 feet of the city property boundary. If you are a rental property owner, please post this notice to tenants.

To help us make decisions about when to allow the use of pesticides, the Parks, Recreation and Culture Department works closely with the city's Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Advisory Committee to identify specific pest thresholds for various pests at each of our irrigated athletic fields. The IPM Advisory Committee is comprised of representatives from city departments including Parks, Recreation and Culture, Health and Human Services, Newton Public Schools, and others, as well as Newton residents with expertise and interest related to field maintenance, environmental advocacy and recreational field use. When the Parks, Recreation and Culture Department observes and documents pests beyond the agreed upon threshold, our formal IPM plan is activated. This is the only acceptable occasion to utilize pesticides.

The City of Newton works hard to limit and avoid whenever possible the use of pesticides on any city property through its comprehensive Integrated Pest Management (IPM) program. Our fields undergo heavy use which leads to soil compaction and wear areas. That, in turn, leads to increased weed growth. By acting with a carefully crafted IPM program, that monitors fields regularly, we expect to create an environment in which athletic turf can again prevail in specifically targeted areas. Any limited approved use of herbicides under the city's IPM program is combined with best practices such as aeration, slice-seeding, fertilization, irrigation and other steps to keep the turf as healthy as possible.

In December of 2018, field users began discussions with our Parks, Recreation and Culture Department about improving athletic fields. In the years that followed, the Parks, Recreation and Culture Department, along with the IPM Committee, have been working towards one common goal: to listen and act on field user concerns to improve athletic field playability. In June of 2020 the City of Newton IPM Advisory Committee approved a pilot herbicide application at three locations. After our 2020 herbicide pilot program was reviewed, we became acutely aware of two things. First herbicides when used properly on athletic fields, work. Second, there are a high number of athletic fields that have surpassed our IPM pest threshold limit.

The area to be treated at Weeks Field (Paul St. side only) consists of approximately 2.5 acres of the 9.7 total site acreage. Only this area will be closed. This area is a multi-functional field and includes: multiple soccer fields and 1 field hockey field. The enclosed map indicates the location of the application.

The application area will be treated with Pylex and Q4 Plus. These are both post-emergent selective herbicides used for grassy and broadleaf weed control. These are the least toxic, most appropriate products for reducing the infestation of Broadleaf Plantain, Crabgrass, Prostrate Knotweed and White Clover in this field. These weeds are established and will continue to spread quickly, competing with the desired turfgrass plants for available water, nutrients, space and sunlight, thinning the desirable turf cover and creating poor playability for users.

Our plan involves applying herbicides when school is not in session (late June – late August), notifying abutters and field users, placing herbicide information at field entry points 48 hours in advance, posting and closing the treated areas for 48 hours after the application in an effort to protect people and pets from exposure. If weed populations continue, the city may apply a second herbicide treatment during August 3, 2024 – August 18, 2024. Our IPM webpage and site notifications will alert residents to the first and potential second treatment. The city will only send out this initial notification letter. Please note that the city's IPM procedure exceeds MA state regulatory requirements for notification and posting.

For more information about the city's IPM policy and procedures scan our qr code below. In the meantime, any questions or comments regarding the proposed application may be directed to Derek Mannion dmannion@newtonma.gov

Nicole Banks, Commissioner

Encl: site map (1), FAQ's (2)

