

Pesticide ban proposed in Blue Hill

By Jennifer Osborn BLUE HILL — A group of Blue Hill residents is proposing an ordinance to prohibit the sale and use of synthetic pesticides in town.

The Blue Hill Healthy Eco-System Ordinance may be voted on at the April 2020 annual Town Meeting.

The ordinance is being proposed by residents Rick Traub, Gabrielle Wellman and Semena Curlick.

In a bit of serendipity, the pair had attended a Blue Hill selectmen's meeting earlier this year to approach the town about a pesticide ban. Traub was there for the same reason.

Since June, the three of have been meeting weekly to draft and refine the proposed ordinance and put together a comprehensive website of information about pesticides and their effects. See <https://www.bluehillhealthyeecosystem.com/>. The website also contains information about possible alternatives to synthetic pesticides.

In drafting an ordinance for Blue Hill, the trio used pesticide ban ordinances that Traub said have already been enacted in at least 29 Maine communities, including Camden, Ogunquit, Portland, South Portland and Rockland.

There are many synthetic pesticides. The ordinance spells out what would be prohibited, including any pesticides classified as "carcinogenic to humans or likely to be carcinogenic to humans," among others.

The proposed ordinance does contain some allowances for commercial use. Blue Hill has commercial farms.

The ordinance also contains a measure to provide for public notice and signage if a property owner or commercial farmer needs to apply a pesticide within 250 feet of an abutter or public way.

Supporters are circulating a petition asking for the proposed ordinance to be placed on the town warrant. There will be a table with the petition at the Winter Market at Mainescape Garden Center on Saturday.

Vaughn Leach, chairman of the Board of Selectmen, said it was likely the question would be voted on by referendum on the Friday of the annual Town Meeting. Next year's annual Town Meeting is Friday, April 3-Saturday, April 4. The ordinance, if voters approve it, would be enforced by the town's code enforcement officer.

The group that has drafted the ordinance has enlisted Four Season Farm owner Eliot Coleman to give a talk titled "Why Pesticides are Superfluous," at the Blue Hill Public Library on Tuesday, Dec. 10, at 7 p.m.

An overview of the proposed ordinance will follow Coleman's talk along with time for questions.