



March 10, 2022

Via email

Stephen DeCoursey, Chair
Arlington Select Board
730 Mass Ave
Arlington, MA 02476
SDeCoursey@town.arlington.ma.us

Re: Support for warrant articles that will reduce the use of toxic rodenticides

Dear Chair DeCoursey and Members of the Arlington Select Board:

On behalf of Charles River Watershed Association (CRWA), I write in support of Article 18, which would amend Town By-laws to prohibit the use of the most environmentally-threatening rodenticides (second generation anticoagulant rodenticides, or SGARs) on public and private property town-wide, and Article 77, a non-binding resolution to encourage drafting a unified Integrated Pest Management Policy (IPM) for all Town properties that would in part prohibit SGAR use on all Town property.

As one of the country's oldest watershed organizations, CRWA's mission is to protect, preserve, and enhance the Charles River and its watershed through science, advocacy, and the law. Our initiatives over the last five decades have dramatically improved the quality of water in the watershed, fundamentally changed approaches to water resource management, and protected the Charles River as a public resource for current and future generations. As a science-based organization, we are concerned about the impact of rodenticides on our rivers and streams, fish and wildlife, and human health.

In March of 2021, a female bald eagle was found dead in her nest on the Charles River. Mass Wildlife officials confirmed that the eagle had suffered a fatal hemorrhage after consuming smaller animals who had themselves consumed rat poison. This eagle was the victim of second-generation anticoagulant rodenticide poisoning. Hundreds of other raptors across the state have suffered similar poisonings. As explained by Mass Audubon, "Second-generation anticoagulants don't kill rodents immediately. While these rodenticides can kill rats with a single dose (which is why many consumers prefer them), poisoned rats can still live for a few days and continue eating poisoned bait. This delay means that rats can ingest enough poison to kill a much larger animal by the time they finally succumb. While any rodenticide can kill a raptor, second-generation anticoagulants are the most dangerous."

Charles River Watershed Association

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The use of these pesticides is already banned in Massachusetts for personal use, but licensed pest companies are still allowed to use them when hired to deal with rodent problems. This has dire implications for the health of ecosystems within our watershed. Raptors play an important ecological role by controlling populations of rodents and other small mammals. If we don't poison them, they will actually help to control rat populations. Further, once a rodenticide is used, its effects reach far beyond rats, mice, or other pests. The poison becomes an artificial, often lethal part of the food chain and can irreversibly harm delicate ecosystems as well as domestic animals and even children.

We urge you to support these two warrant articles that will reduce the use of toxic rodenticides Arlington.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Heather Miller". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Heather Miller, Esq.
General Counsel & Policy Director