

EPA's Pesticide Strategy and Pesticide Label Changes

Whether you apply your own crop protection tools or hire an applicator, big changes are coming to how those products are regulated.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has been on the losing side of dozens of lawsuits from environmental activists claiming the agency has not done enough during pesticide registrations and reviews to reduce risks to plants and animals protected under the Endangered Species Act. As a result, EPA developed strategies to better protect those species, which are starting to become part of pesticide labels across the US.

What does this mean for farmers?

You and your applicators will start seeing labels – as each product undergoes its periodic review process – with instructions to visit the [Bulletins Live! Two](#) website for area-specific restrictions for use. These new restrictions, even though they will be posted on a website instead of printed on a product label, will still be federally required just like any direction on the label itself. That means it will be vital for you or your applicator to check the website for restrictions in your area.

Why not just print restrictions on the label?

Believe it or not, this is EPA's attempt to keep pest control products in the hands of growers and not cancel those registrations or make them unavailable across wide swaths of the country. The additional instructions take a closer look at where endangered plants and animals are found, how risky pest control products are to those species, and what kind of "mitigation" practices can reduce that exposure risk so that the product can still be used.

Listing these instructions on EPA's website allows those instructions to be site-specific so they don't apply to farmers outside an endangered species' range. It also allows EPA to list practices farmers and applicators can use to reduce exposure risk where those species are found to keep the products they need in their hands.

Situations where no mitigations are needed:

- There are only managed areas (ag fields, roads, buildings, managed wetlands, closed-system irrigation, etc.) for 1000 feet down-gradient from the application site
- Field has runoff/discharge capture (water retention ponds, sediment control basins, perimeter berms, controlled tile drainage, etc.)
- Less than 3% slope on entire site
- Application by soil or tree injection, or subsurface under plastic
- Application by spot treatment (<1000 square feet) or less than 1/10 acre

Where to start:

1. FIRST: look at your product label: National/regional-level requirements will be here
2. THEN: If the label directs you to Bulletins Live! Two, go to:
<https://www.epa.gov/endangered-species/bulletins-live-two-view-bulletins>. This will tell you if there are Pesticide Use Limitation Areas (PULAs) in your local area for the product.
3. You will need the product's EPA Registration number:

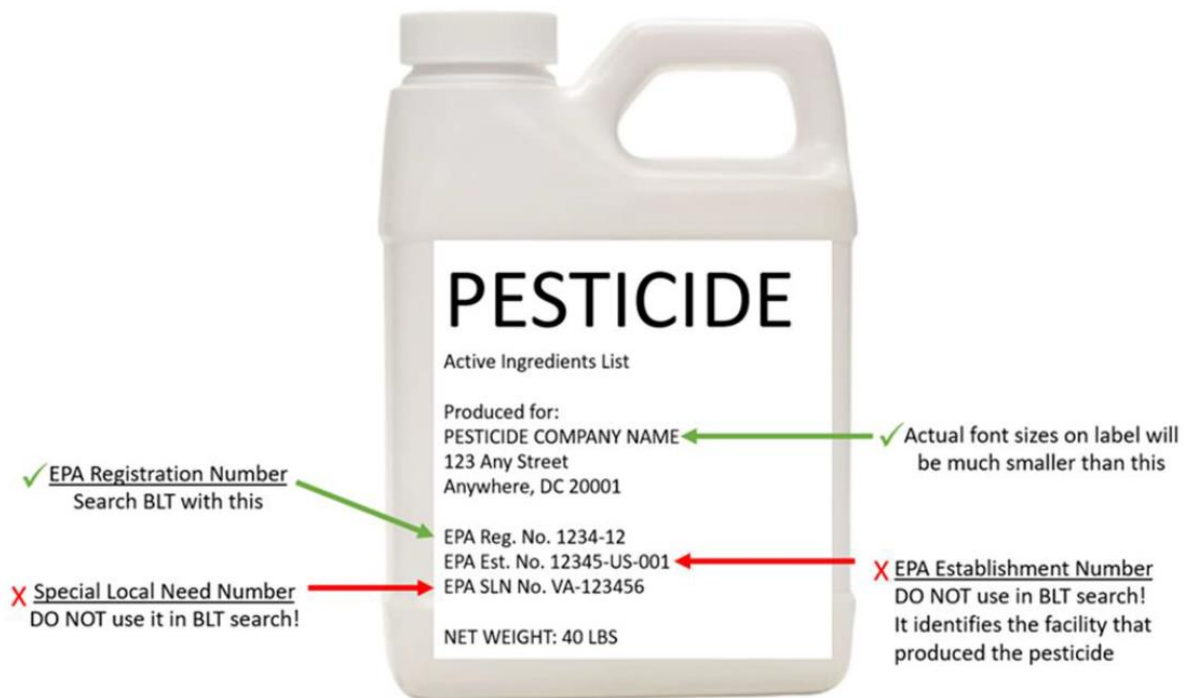


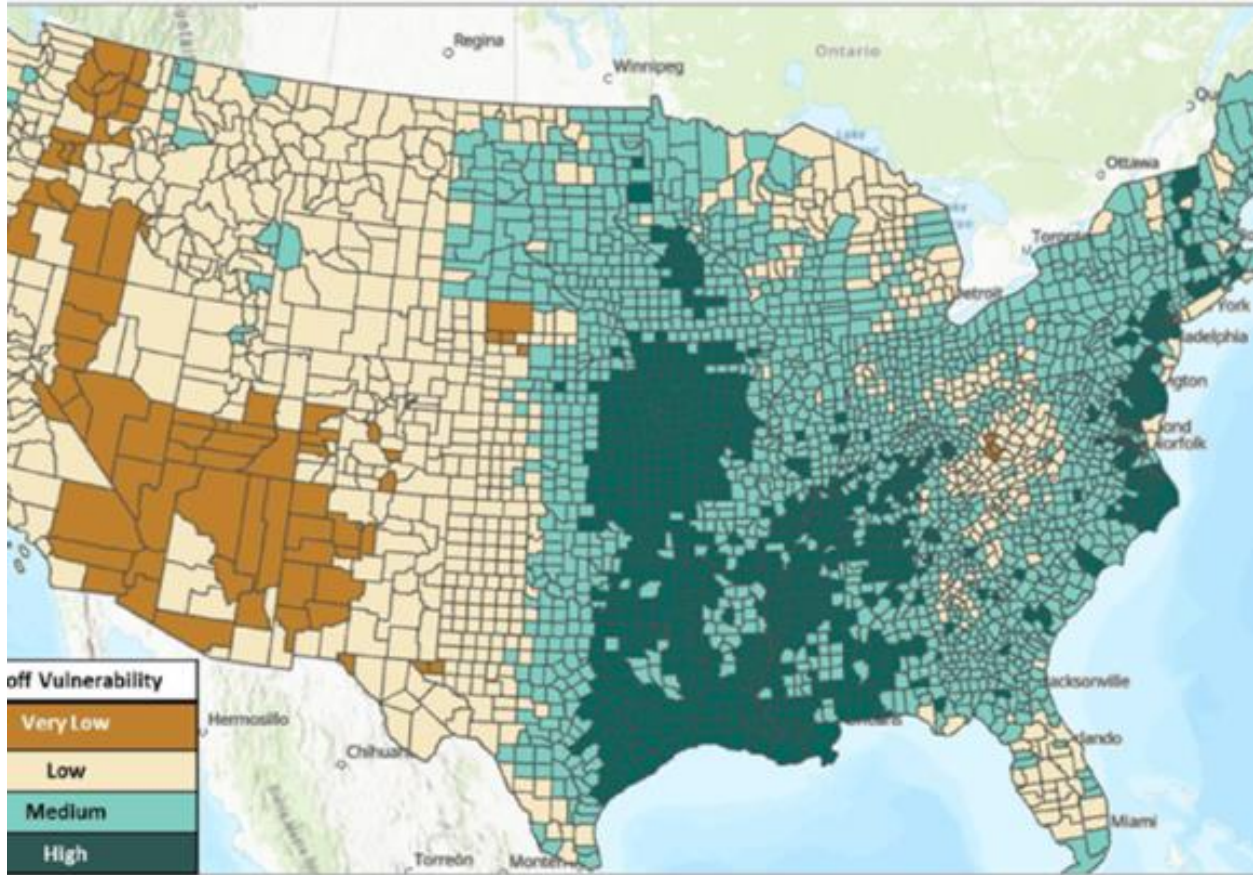
Illustration by EPA

If Bulletins Live! Two says your field is in a PULA or if the label requires mitigations:

1. Find your product and field on Bulletins Live! Two no more than 6 months before application and KEEP a copy of that record to show what the requirement was on that date (if the requirement changes, so long as it was current within 6 months of your application, you are in compliance)
2. Look at the point value for runoff/erosion reduction and the drift buffer distance needed for your product (if you are using more than one product, use the product with the highest numbers to make your calculation)
3. Calculate how many points and buffer reductions you already have to see if additional mitigation practices are necessary
4. Select the mitigations or buffer actions suitable for your farm that meets the goal number
5. DOCUMENT your work (recordkeeping is worth 1 point all by itself!)

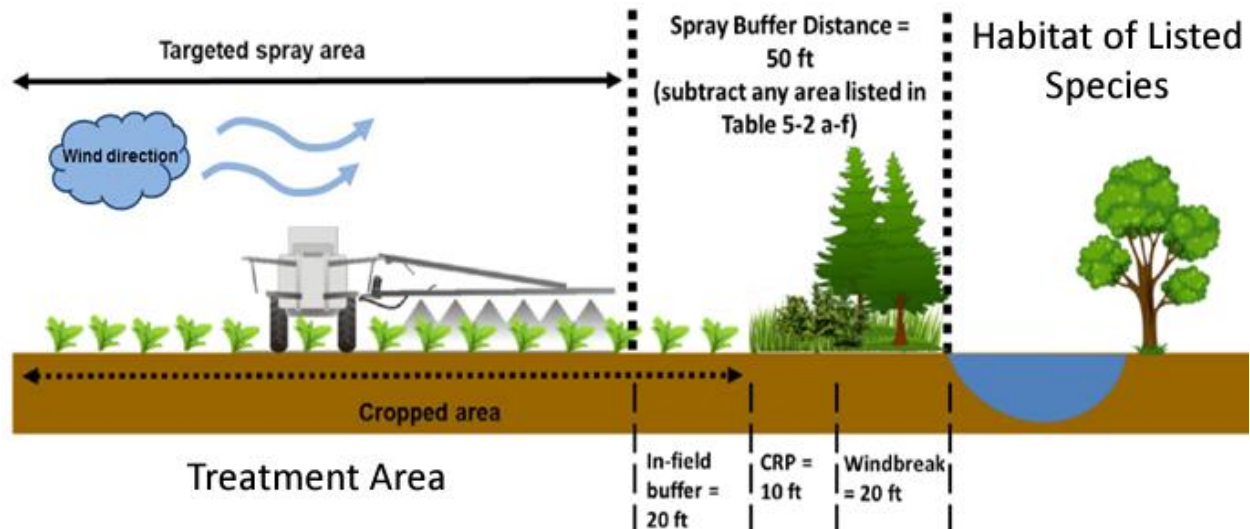
Calculating Runoff Points:

- Start with the runoff vulnerability for your county (yellow gives you 3 points, light blue gives you 2 points)



Map by US EPA

- Give yourself 1 point if you're working with a technical expert or 2 points for participating in a conservation program (like MAEAP)
- Give yourself the 1 point for documenting your practices
- If more mitigations are needed, select practices that work for your farm (or document if they are already there), such as:
 - Application rate reduction: 1-3 points
 - Conservation tillage: 2-3 points
 - Reservoir tillage: 3 points
 - Cover crops: 1-3 points
 - Mulch: 1-3 points
 - Erosion barriers (silt fence, wattle, etc.): 2 points
 - Grassed waterway: 2 points
 - Vegetated filter strip: 1-3 points
 - Irrigation management (drip tape, soil moisture sensors, microsprinklers, etc.): 2-3 points
- Calculate Drift Reduction needed:



Graphic by Pest Management Regulatory Agency of Health Canada

- Begin with your total buffer distance needed (0 - 320 feet, depending on application method (ground, aerial, airblast) and droplet size (coarse, medium, fine))
- Determine the portion of the field where application will occur, calculate the buffer from there
- Calculate reductions (reductions can be 50-75% for these features):
 - Neighboring ag fields
 - Roads / mowed road or field edges / bare ground next to field
 - Buildings
 - Vegetated filter strips / field borders
 - Hedge rows / forest buffers
 - Constructed wetlands
 - Closed irrigation systems unconnected to other surface waters
 - Conservation Reserve Program lands
- If additional drift buffer practices are needed:
 - Reducing application rate: % reduction = % distance reduction
 - Lowering boom height: 50-75% distance reduction
 - Increasing droplet size: 50-75% distance reduction
 - Spray hoods: 50-75% distance reduction
 - Relative humidity >60%: 10% distance reduction
 - Spray below crop (drop nozzles, etc.): 50% distance reduction
 - Airblast deflector or tower sprayer: TBD
 - Spray adjuvants: TBD
 - Drone application: TBD

Additional Resources:

[EPA's Pesticides and ESA Educational Resources Toolbox](#)

[EPA's Mitigation Menu](#)

[Bulletins Live! Two](#)

[Michigan State University Tutorial and Technical Support for Bulletins Live! Two](#)

[Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development's Pesticide Programs](#)