

# FW: Synthetic turf debate

Chris Seidel

Fri 2/12/2021 1:40 PM

To: Adam Turner <turner@mvcommission.org>; Alex Elvin <elvin@mvcommission.org>; Bill Veno <veno@mvcommission.org>; Christina Mankowski <mankowski@mvcommission.org>; Christine Flynn <flynn@mvcommission.org>; Curtis Schroeder <schroeder@mvcommission.org>; Dan Doyle <ddoyle@mvcommission.org>; Lucy Morrison <morrison@mvcommission.org>; Mike Mauro <mauro@mvcommission.org>; Sheri Caseau <caseau@mvcommission.org>;

FYI ....

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**From:** Judith Belushi Pisano <judyvineyard@mac.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, February 12, 2021 1:39 PM  
**To:** Chris Seidel <seidel@mvcommission.org>  
**Cc:** psb@senseofwondercreations.org  
**Subject:** Synthetic turf debate

To the Commissioners:

For all the reasons Pam Benjamin has so clearly set forth in her email below, I support natural turf for the high school. I understand the temptation to look for cheaper, easier field management, but the facts quite clearly point to a lopsided, negative trade-off in regard to environmental and health concerns.

You face an important decision which will impact the island community, and all who spend time on our high school fields, for decades to come. I believe – and hope you will also conclude – that natural turf is the only decision one can make in good conscience.

Thank you for taking the time to hear my words while weighing this issue.

Judy Belushi Pisano  
48 Maura Way  
Vineyard Haven

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** Pamela Benjamin <[psb@senseofwondercreations.org](mailto:psb@senseofwondercreations.org)>  
**Date:** February 12, 2021 at 11:26:41 AM EST  
**To:** VineyardCares <[psb@senseofwondercreations.org](mailto:psb@senseofwondercreations.org)>, TisburyA <[psb@senseofwondercreations.org](mailto:psb@senseofwondercreations.org)>, TisburyB <[psb@senseofwondercreations.org](mailto:psb@senseofwondercreations.org)>

Dear Martha's Vineyard Commission,

I hope that you and your families are all healthy, happy and safe. I am writing to you today because our family is enormously concerned about the possibility of having plastic grass or chemical grass, AKA artificial turf on the Martha's Vineyard Regional High School fields. Just the knowledge that there are all those PFAS chemicals in plastic grass is bone chilling and worrisome,

and this does not include the toxic chemicals that will be used to clean the plastic and the pesticides and chemical weed killers that will be used to eliminate the plants that grow through it... according to articles that I have read. (see below) We have three grandsons in the high school at the moment who love and play sports. Our whole family is very anxious about this prospect, it goes against every environmental and ecologically conscious concept and also everything that our beautiful island of Martha's Vineyard stands for. We are extremely concerned about the possibility of our grandsons playing on those toxic fields and also every other MVRHS student who will be using the playing fields. There have also been studies that find that there are more injuries on artificial turf than on well-maintained grass fields (see below). I played sports when I was in High School and was thrilled to be out of the institutional school building, running, sitting on, touching, smelling and feeling the live blades of grass under my feet. It was a very enriching, poignant and healing experience that I hope will always be offered to our MVRHS students.

I hope that all this information I am including in this message (below) and more is getting to the Commission members and the public. The articles are very easy to access on line. Please make sure you are choosing articles that are published by highly rated and trusted environmental organizations and medical experts.

Thank you all so much for your service to our community and all that you do. We are confident that you have our island students best interests and the interests of the health and wellbeing of our beautiful island in mind.

Thank you so much for reading this letter.

Wishing you all the best, Pam Stevens Benjamin, Founder and Director of Sense of Wonder Creations Inc

<https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2019/aug/02/turf-it-out-is-it-time-to-say-goodbye-to-artificial-grass>

“If your attention during the Women’s World Cup was on the pitch rather than the players, you might have noticed that the matches were all played on real grass. That was a hard-won change, made after the US team complained to Fifa **that they sustained more injuries on artificial turf.**”

And from *Popular Science* Magazine: <https://www.popsci.com/sports-injury-turf-grass-football-soccer/>

“The study leveraged 10 years of data on college football injuries from the NCAA Injury Surveillance System, which collects information from Division I, II, and III athletic programs. That data set included over 3 million athlete exposures—times when an athlete participated in a practice or game—and 2,460 knee injuries. Playing on turf made an athlete nearly three times more likely to suffer a PCL injury, across all three divisions. Division II and III athletes were around one and a half times more likely to suffer an ACL injury on turf... “

The president of the NFL Players association JC Tretter released this powerful statement: <https://nflpa.com/posts/only-natural-grass-can-level-the-nfls-playing-field>

<https://www.ewg.org/childrenshealth/22912/new-studies-show-pfas-artificial-grass-blades-and-backing> ( Environmental Working Group EWG)

PEER and the Ecology Center tested eight different samples of turf. They all tested positive for total fluorine, which suggests the presence of PFAS. PFAS are used in the manufacturing process to make the turf blades pliable enough for extrusion. The organizations tested for 36 types of PFAS, but there may be many other PFAS in synthetic grass.

There are between [12,000 and 13,000 artificial fields](#) in use in the U.S. The turf and infill of a single deconstructed field weighs about 44,000 pounds. There are also many fields no longer in active use. Fields need to be replaced every 8 to 10 years, according to the [Synthetic Turf Council](#), with between 1,200 and 1,500 fields being replaced at any given time.

<https://www.ecocenter.org/toxic-forever-chemicals-infest-artificial-turf>

***Washington, DC* — The toxic chemicals used in fire retardants and non-stick cookware have been found in artificial turf carpet, according to Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER) and The Ecology Center. This raises new public health and environmental concerns, including the potential of these chemicals to leach from turf fields into nearby waters.**

**Per-and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are called “forever chemicals” because they do not break down in the environment and bio-accumulate in the food chain. Human exposures to PFAS are associated with cancer, birth defects, and other impairments. Massachusetts is poised to implement a ground water and drinking water standard of 20 ppt for six PFAS, individually or combined.**

**!!**

**\*\*\* Here is more information ( link below) about the groundwater standard in Massachusetts.**

**And here is part of a letter from the Vineyard Conservation Society that explains the different PFAS chemical codes:**

**PFAS: Confusion and Controversy**

The current confusion and controversy surrounding PFAS – including to what extent a given chemical causes health problems, and whether a specific plastic product contains one chemical or another – is illustrative of the broader challenges in fairly evaluating the safety of this proposal.

PFAS are a class of chemicals used in industrial manufacturing, most frequently as stain repellents, paints, and other coatings. It is important to understand that PFAS share not just chemistry, but also physical properties. Therefore, when clear evidence emerges that a certain compound is harmful to human health (as has been demonstrated with PFOS and PFOA), the offending chemical can often be replaced by a different PFAS compound that will accomplish the same industrial purpose. New PFAS compounds (and non-PFAS alternatives, which may accomplish the same purposes, but in turn may also prove toxic) are continually being developed. In our regulatory system, if a new chemical has not YET been demonstrated to cause harm, that is sufficient to allow its use in production.

Naturally, the plastics industry touts the safety of new chemicals that are developed to replace the ones now demonstrated to be unsafe; likewise, public health and environmental advocates (including VCS) view these replacement chemicals with suspicion. We understand the lack of information on new, and often undisclosed, chemicals presents a dilemma for decision makers. What we urge, though, is that assurances of safety from the turf industry should be met with skepticism.

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Sense of Wonder Creations

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