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LONG ISLAND

DEC: Costco to pay \$60G fine over insecticide

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Big-box retailer Costco has agreed to pay a \$60,000 fine for selling an insecticide product banned on Long Island, the state Department of Environmental Conservation said yesterday.

The company also has been ordered to remove the product from its Long Island stores and to issue a recall notice to its members, said Joe Martens, commissioner for the state agency.

"Long Island's sole-source aquifer is especially vulnerable to contamination, and DEC takes its responsibility to enforce environmental laws very seriously," Martens said in a statement.

The agency said it received a tip from a shopper in March of last year that Costco's Holbrook store was selling Bayer Advanced Lawn Complete Insect Killer, despite a label that said it is "not for sale, sale into,

distribution and or use in Nassau, Suffolk, Kings and Queens counties of New York."

The shopper spoke to a Costco manager and the product was removed from the sales floor, the DEC said. The consumer then emailed a summary of the complaint, including photographs, to the DEC.

The state responded with an investigation that confirmed the product's removal.

Bayer Advanced Lawn Complete Insect Killer is banned on Long Island to protect the aquifer that supplies the region's drinking water. The DEC has determined that the product's concentration of imidacloprid, a powerful insecticide, is too high.

A Costco representative could not be reached for comment.

Adrienne Esposito, executive director of Citizens Campaign for the Environment, a nonprofit advocacy group with an office in Farmingdale, praised the DEC and commended the con-



Costco improperly sold a potent insecticide, the state says. Above, the chain's Nesconset store. ED BETZ

cerned resident whose "actions led to the removal of this banned product."

The \$60,000 fine, she said, should be used to start a new fund to advance the clean water agenda on Long Island,

funding initiatives that would include testing private wells, and educating the public on organic lawn and garden care.

After the DEC investigation, Costco issued a recall notice to those who purchased the prod-

uct from its Long Island stores. More than 1,000 containers were ordered last spring and several hundred were sold, according to the DEC.

With Patricia Kitchen and Emily C. Dooley