

WRAITH LAW
16485 Laguna Canyon Rd., Suite 250
Irvine, California 92618
(949) 251-9977

1 WILLIAM F. WRAITH, SBN 185927
WRAITH LAW
2 16485 Laguna Canyon Rd., Suite 250
Irvine, California 92618
3 Tel: (949) 251-9977
Fax: (949) 251-9978
4

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5 Attorneys for Plaintiff
Environmental Research Center
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8 SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA
9 COUNTY OF ORANGE, CENTRAL JUSTICE CENTER
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12 ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH) **Case No.:** 30-2013-00628499-CU-MC-CJC
CENTER, a California non-profit)
13 corporation,) Judge Geoffrey T. Glass
14 Plaintiffs,) **COMPLAINT FOR INJUNCTIVE**
) **RELIEF AND CIVIL PENALTIES**
15 vs.) **[Health & Safety Code § 25249.5, et seq.]**
)
16 BANYAN BOTANICALS, BANYAN) **[UNLIMITED CIVIL CASE - AMOUNT**
TRADING, CO., BANYAN TRADING,) **DEMANDED EXCEEDS \$25,000]**
17 LLC and DOES 1-25, Inclusive,)
18 Defendants.)
19

20
21 Plaintiff Environmental Research Center, Inc. brings this action in the interests of the
22 general public and, on information and belief, hereby alleges:

23 **INTRODUCTION**

24 1. This action seeks to remedy Defendants' continuing failure to warn consumers in
25 California that they are being exposed to lead, a substance known to the State of California to
26 cause cancer, birth defects and other reproductive harm.

27 2. Defendants have manufactured, packaged, distributed, marketed, sold and/or have
28 otherwise been involved in the chain of commerce of, and continue to manufacture, package,

1 distribute, market, sell and/or otherwise continue to be involved in the chain of commerce of the
2 following ingestible products, which contain the chemical lead and which have been and
3 continue to be offered for sale, sold and/or otherwise provided for use and/or handling to
4 individuals in California:

- 5 a. Banyan Botanicals Ayurvedic Herbs I Sleep Soundly
- 6 b. Banyan Botanicals Ayurvedic Herbs Healthy Kapha
- 7 c. Banyan Botanicals Ayurvedic Herbs Ashwagandha
- 8 d. Banyan Botanicals Ayurvedic Herbs Healthy Vata
- 9 e. Banyan Botanicals Ayurvedic Herbs Haritaki
- 10 f. Banyan Botanicals Ayurvedic Herbs Healthy Hair
- 11 g. Banyan Botanicals Ayurvedic Herbs Blood Cleanse
- 12 h. Banyan Botanicals Ayurvedic Herbs Healthy Pitta
- 13 i. Banyan Botanicals Ayurvedic Herbs Heart Formula
- 14 j. Banyan Botanicals Ayurvedic Herbs Kidney Formula
- 15 k. Banyan Botanicals Ayurvedic Herbs Trim Support
- 16 l. Banyan Botanicals Ayurvedic Herbs Men's Support
- 17 m. Banyan Botanicals Ayurvedic Herbs Shatavari
- 18 n. Banyan Botanicals Ayurvedic Herbs Vata Digest
- 19 o. Banyan Botanicals Ayurvedic Herbs Immune Support
- 20 p. Banyan Botanicals Ayurvedic Herbs Lung Formula
- 21 q. Banyan Botanicals Ayurvedic Herbs Joint Support
- 22 r. Banyan Botanicals Ayurvedic Herbs Mental Clarity
- 23 s. Banyan Botanicals Ayurvedic Herbs Kapha Digest
- 24 t. Banyan Botanicals Ayurvedic Herbs Liver Formula
- 25 u. Banyan Botanicals Ayurvedic Herbs Tranquil Mind
- 26 v. Banyan Botanicals Ayurvedic Herbs Gokshuradi Guggulu
- 27 w. Banyan Botanicals Ayurvedic Herbs Kanchar Guggulu
- 28 x. Banyan Botanicals Ayurvedic Herbs Kaishore Guggulu

- 1 y. Banyan Botanicals Ayurvedic Herbs Stress Ease
- 2 z. Banyan Botanicals Ayurvedic Herbs Sweet Ease
- 3 aa. Banyan Botanicals Ayurvedic Herbs Women’s Support
- 4 bb. Banyan Botanicals Ayurvedic Herbs Para Cleanse
- 5 cc. Banyan Botanicals Ayurvedic Herbs Pitta Digest
- 6 dd. Banyan Botanicals Ayurvedic Herbs Neem
- 7 ee. Banyan Botanicals Ayurvedic Herbs Triphala

8 These listed products are hereinafter referred to together as “THE PRODUCTS”.

9 3. The use and/or handling of THE PRODUCTS causes exposures to lead at levels
10 requiring a “clear and reasonable warning” under California’s Safe Drinking Water and Toxic
11 Enforcement Act of 1986, Health & Safety Code (“H&S Code”) §25249.5, *et. seq.* (also known
12 as “Proposition 65”). Defendants have failed to provide the health hazard warnings required by
13 Proposition 65.

14 4. The continued manufacturing, packaging, distributing, marketing and/or sales of
15 THE PRODUCTS without the required health hazard warnings, causes individuals to be
16 involuntarily and unwittingly exposed to levels of lead that violate Proposition 65.

17 5. Plaintiff seeks injunctive relief enjoining Defendants from the continued
18 manufacturing, packaging, distributing, marketing and/or selling of THE PRODUCTS for sale or
19 use in California without first providing clear and reasonable warnings, within the meaning of
20 Proposition 65, regarding the risks of cancer, birth defects and other reproductive harm posed by
21 exposure to lead through the use and/or handling of THE PRODUCTS. Plaintiff seeks an
22 injunctive order compelling Defendants to bring each of its business practices into compliance
23 with Proposition 65 by providing clear and reasonable warnings to each individual who may be
24 exposed to lead from the use and/or handling of THE PRODUCTS. Plaintiff also seeks an order
25 compelling Defendants to identify and locate each individual person who in the past has
26 purchased the PRODUCTS, and to provide to each such purchaser a clear and reasonable
27 warning that the use of the PRODUCTS will cause exposures to Lead.

28 6. In addition to injunctive relief, Plaintiff seeks an assessment of civil penalties to

1 remedy Defendants’ failure to provide clear and reasonable warnings regarding exposures to the
2 lead.

3 **JURISDICTION AND VENUE**

4 7. This Court has jurisdiction over this action pursuant to California Constitution
5 Article VI, Section 10, which grants the Superior Court “original jurisdiction in all causes except
6 those given by statute to other trial courts.” The statute under which this action is brought does
7 not specify any other basis for jurisdiction.

8 8. This Court has jurisdiction over Defendants because, based on information and
9 belief, each Defendant is a business having sufficient minimum contacts with California, or
10 otherwise intentionally availing itself of the California market through the marketing,
11 distribution and/or sale of THE PRODUCTS in the State of California to render the exercise of
12 jurisdiction over it by the California courts consistent with traditional notions of fair play and
13 substantial justice.

14 9. This Court is the proper venue for this action because each Defendant has violated
15 California law in the County of Orange. Furthermore, this Court is the proper venue under Code
16 of Civil Procedure §395.5 and H&S Code §25249.7(a), which provides that any person who
17 violates or threatens to violate H&S Code §§25249.5 or 25249.6 may be enjoined in any court of
18 competent jurisdiction.

19 **PARTIES**

20 10. Plaintiff Environmental Research Center, Inc. (“ERC”) is a non-profit corporation
21 organized under California’s Non-Profit Benefit Corporation Law. ERC is dedicated to, among
22 other causes, reducing the use and misuse of hazardous and toxic substances, consumer
23 protection, worker safety and corporate responsibility.

24 11. ERC is a person within the meaning of H&S Code §25118 and brings this
25 enforcement action in the public interest pursuant to H&S Code §25249.7(d).

26 12. Defendant BANYAN BOTANICALS is a business of unknown form that is a
27 person within the meaning of H&S Code §25249.11(a).

28 13. Plaintiff alleges on information and belief that Defendant BANYAN TRADING,

1 CO. is a New Mexico Corporation that is a person within the meaning of H&S Code
2 §25249.11(a).

3 14. Plaintiff alleges on information and belief that Defendant BANYAN TRADING,
4 LLC is a New Mexico Limited Liability Company that is a person within the meaning of H&S
5 Code §25249.11(a).

6 15. Each defendant has manufactured, packaged, distributed, marketed, sold and/or
7 have otherwise been involved in the chain of commerce, and continues to manufacture, package,
8 distribute, market, sell and/or otherwise continue to be involved in the chain of commerce of
9 THE PRODUCTS for sale or use in California. Defendants employ ten or more persons, and are
10 thus each a “person in the course of doing business” within the meaning of Proposition 65.

11 16. Defendants DOES 1-50 are named herein under fictitious names, as their true
12 names and capacities are unknown to Plaintiff. ERC is informed and believes, and thereon
13 alleges, that each of said DOES has manufactured, packaged, distributed, marketed, sold and/or
14 has otherwise been involved in the chain of commerce of, and continues to manufacture,
15 package, distribute, market, sell, and/or otherwise continues to be involved in the chain of
16 commerce of THE PRODUCTS for sale or use in California, and/or is responsible, in some
17 actionable manner, for the events and happenings referred to herein, either through its conduct or
18 through the conduct of its agents, servants or employees, or in some other manner, causing the
19 harms alleged herein. Plaintiff will seek leave to amend this Complaint to set forth the true
20 names and capacities of DOES when ascertained.

21 17. Plaintiffs are informed and believe and thereon allege that each of the defendants
22 is in some manner responsible for the events set forth in this Complaint and proximately caused
23 the injuries and damages to Plaintiffs as alleged in this Complaint.

24 18. Plaintiff is informed and believes and thereon alleges that at all material times,
25 defendants, and each of them, were the agents, servants, and employees of the other defendants,
26 and each of them in such a way as to cause each defendant to be jointly and severally liable and
27 responsible for the conduct of one another. The conduct of each defendant was within the course
28 and scope of the authority granted each defendant by the other defendants. Each defendant

1 ratified and approved of the acts or omissions of each other such as to cause each to be jointly
2 and severally liable for the conduct of each other defendant.

3 **STATUTORY BACKGROUND**

4 19. The People of the State of California have declared in Proposition 65 their right
5 “[t]o be informed about exposures to chemicals that cause cancer, birth defects, or other
6 reproductive harm.” (Section 1(b) of Initiative Measure, Proposition 65).

7 20. To effect this goal, Proposition 65 requires that individuals be provided with a
8 “clear and reasonable warning” before being exposed to substances listed by the State of
9 California as causing cancer or reproductive toxicity. H&S Code §25249.6 states, in pertinent
10 part:

11 No person in the course of doing business shall knowingly and
12 intentionally expose any individual to a chemical known to the state to
13 cause cancer or reproductive toxicity without first giving clear and
14 reasonable warning to such individual....

15 21. Proposition 65 provides that any person who “violates or threatens to violate” the
16 statute “may be enjoined in any court of competent jurisdiction.” (H&S Code §25249.7(a).)
17 “Threaten to violate” is defined to mean creating “a condition in which there is a substantial
18 probability that a violation will occur.” (H&S Code §25249.11(e).) Violators are liable for civil
19 penalties of up to \$2,500 per day for each violation of Proposition 65. (H&S Code §25249.7(b).)

20 **FACTUAL BACKGROUND**

21 22. On February 27, 1987, the State of California officially listed the chemical lead as
22 a chemical known to cause developmental and reproductive toxicity. Lead became subject to the
23 warning requirement one year later and was therefore subject to the “clear and reasonable”
24 warning requirements of Proposition 65 beginning on February 27, 1988. (27 California Code of
25 Regulations (“CCR”) §25000, *et seq.*; H&S Code §25249.5, *et seq.*)

26 23. On October 1, 1992, the State of California officially listed the chemical lead as a
27 chemical known to cause cancer. Lead became subject to the warning requirement one year later
28 and was therefore subject to the “clear and reasonable” warning requirements of Proposition 65

1 beginning on October 1, 1993. (27 CCR §25000, *et seq.*; H&S Code §25249.5, *et seq.*)

2 24. Plaintiff is informed and believes, and based on such information and belief,
3 alleges THE PRODUCTS have been marketed, distributed and/or sold to individuals in
4 California without the requisite clear and reasonable warnings before, on, and after September
5 13, 2009. THE PRODUCTS continue to be marketed, distributed and sold in California without
6 the requisite warning information.

7 25. As a proximate result of acts by Defendants, as a person in the course of doing
8 business within the meaning of H&S Code §25249.11(b), individuals throughout the State of
9 California, including in the County of Orange, have been exposed to lead without clear and
10 reasonable warnings. The individuals subject to exposures to lead include normal and
11 foreseeable users of THE PRODUCTS, as well as all other persons exposed to THE
12 PRODUCTS.

13 26. At all times relevant to this action, Defendants have knowingly and intentionally
14 exposed the users and/or handlers of THE PRODUCTS to lead without first giving clear and
15 reasonable warnings to such individuals.

16 27. Individuals using or handling THE PRODUCTS are exposed to lead in excess of
17 the “maximum allowable daily” and “no significant risk” levels determined by the State of
18 California, as applicable.

19 28. At all times relevant to this action, Defendants have, in the course of doing
20 business, failed to provide individuals using and/or handling THE PRODUCTS with clear and
21 reasonable warnings that THE PRODUCTS expose individuals to lead.

22 29. THE PRODUCTS continue to be marketed, distributed, and/or sold in California
23 without the requisite clear and reasonable warnings.

24 **FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION**

25 **(Injunctive Relief for Violations of Health and Safety Code §25249.5, *et seq.*)**

26 30. Plaintiff hereby incorporates by reference each and every preceding allegation and
27 paragraph as though fully set forth in this cause of action.

28 31. On March 8, 2012, Plaintiff sent a 60-Day Notice of Proposition 65 violations to

1 the requisite public enforcement agencies and to Defendants BANYAN BOTANICALS,
2 BANYAN TRADING, CO., and BANYAN TRADING, LLC (“Notice of Violations”). THE
3 PRODUCTS were identified in the Notice of Violations as containing lead exceeding allowable
4 levels. The Notice of Violations was issued pursuant to, and in compliance with, the
5 requirements of H&S Code §25249.7(d) and the statute’s implementing regulations regarding the
6 notices of violations to be given to certain public enforcement agencies and to the violator. The
7 Notice of Violations was issued as follows:

- 8 a. Defendants BANYAN BOTANICALS, BANYAN TRADING, CO., and
9 BANYAN TRADING, LLC and the California Attorney General were provided
10 copies by Priority Mail of the Notices of Violations, along with a Certificate of
11 Merit by the attorney for the noticing party stating that there is a reasonable and
12 meritorious cause for this action. The requisite county district attorneys and city
13 attorneys were provided copies by Priority Mail of the Notices of Violations and
14 Certificate of Merit.
- 15 b. Defendants BANYAN BOTANICALS, BANYAN TRADING, CO., and
16 BANYAN TRADING, LLC were provided, with the Notice of Violations, a copy
17 of a document entitled “The Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Act of
18 1986 (Proposition 65): A Summary,” which is also known as Appendix A to Title
19 27 of CCR § 25903.
- 20 c. The California Attorney General was provided, with the Notice of Violations,
21 additional factual information sufficient to establish a basis for the Certificate of
22 Merit, including the identity of the persons consulted with and relied on by the
23 certifier, and the facts, studies, or other data reviewed by those persons, pursuant
24 to H&S Code §§25249.7(d)(1) and 25249.7(h)(2).

25 32. The appropriate public enforcement agencies have failed to commence and
26 diligently prosecute a cause of action under H&S Code §25249.5, *et seq.* against Defendants
27 based on the allegations herein.

28 33. By committing the acts alleged in this Complaint, Defendants at all times relevant

1 to this action, and continuing through the present, have violated and continue to violate H&S
2 Code §25249.6 by, in the course of doing business, knowingly and intentionally exposing
3 individuals who use or handle THE PRODUCTS to the chemical lead at levels exceeding
4 allowable exposure levels without Defendants first giving clear and reasonable warnings to such
5 individuals pursuant to H&S Code §§25249.6 and 25249.11(f). Defendants have manufactured,
6 packaged, distributed, marketed, sold and/or has otherwise been involved in the chain of
7 commerce of, and continue to manufacture, package, distribute, market, sell and/or otherwise
8 continue to be involved in the chain of commerce of THE PRODUCTS, which have been, are,
9 and will be used and/or handled by individuals in California, without Defendants providing clear
10 and reasonable warnings, within the meaning of Proposition 65, regarding the risks of cancer,
11 birth defects and other reproductive harm posed by exposure to lead through the use and/or
12 handling of THE PRODUCTS. Furthermore, Defendants have threatened to violate H&S Code
13 §25249.6 by THE PRODUCTS being marketed, offered for sale, sold and/or otherwise provided
14 for use and/or handling to individuals in California.

15 34. By the above-described acts, Defendants have violated H&S Code §25249.6 and
16 is therefore subject to an injunction ordering Defendant to stop violating Proposition 65, and to
17 provide required warnings to consumers and other individuals who will purchase, use and/or
18 handle THE PRODUCTS.

19 35. An action for injunctive relief under Proposition 65 is specifically authorized by
20 Health & Safety Code §25249.7(a).

21 36. Continuing commission by Defendants of the acts alleged above will irreparably
22 harm the citizens of the State of California, for which harm they have no plain, speedy, or
23 adequate remedy at law.

24 37. Wherefore, plaintiff prays judgment against Defendants, as set forth hereafter.

25 **SECOND CAUSE OF ACTION**

26 **(Civil Penalties for Violations of Health and Safety Code §25249.5, et seq.)**

27 38. Plaintiff hereby incorporates by reference each and every preceding allegation and
28 paragraph as though fully set forth in this cause of action.

1 39. On March 8, 2012, Plaintiff sent a 60-Day Notice of Proposition 65 violations to
2 the requisite public enforcement agencies and to Defendants BANYAN BOTANICALS,
3 BANYAN TRADING, CO., and BANYAN TRADING, LLC (“Notice of Violations”). THE
4 PRODUCTS were identified in the Notice of Violations as containing lead exceeding allowable
5 levels. The Notice of Violations was issued pursuant to, and in compliance with, the
6 requirements of H&S Code §25249.7(d) and the statute’s implementing regulations regarding the
7 notices of violations to be given to certain public enforcement agencies and to the violator. The
8 Notice of Violations was issued as follows:

- 9 a. Defendants BANYAN BOTANICALS, BANYAN TRADING, CO., and
10 BANYAN TRADING, LLC and the California Attorney General were provided
11 copies by Priority Mail of the Notices of Violations, along with a Certificate of
12 Merit by the attorney for the noticing party stating that there is a reasonable and
13 meritorious cause for this action. The requisite county district attorneys and city
14 attorneys were provided copies by Priority Mail of the Notices of Violations and
15 Certificate of Merit.
- 16 b. Defendants BANYAN BOTANICALS, BANYAN TRADING, CO., and
17 BANYAN TRADING, LLC were provided, with the Notice of Violations, a copy
18 of a document entitled “The Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Act of
19 1986 (Proposition 65): A Summary,” which is also known as Appendix A to Title
20 27 of CCR § 25903.
- 21 c. The California Attorney General was provided, with the Notice of Violations,
22 additional factual information sufficient to establish a basis for the Certificate of
23 Merit, including the identity of the persons consulted with and relied on by the
24 certifier, and the facts, studies, or other data reviewed by those persons, pursuant
25 to H&S Code §§25249.7(d)(1) and 25249.7(h)(2).

26 40. The appropriate public enforcement agencies have failed to commence and
27 diligently prosecute a cause of action under H&S Code §25249.5, *et seq.* against Defendants
28 based on the allegations herein.

PRAYER FOR RELIEF

Wherefore, Plaintiff prays for the following relief against Defendants BANYAN BOTANICALS, BANYAN TRADING, CO., and BANYAN TRADING, LLC:

A. A preliminary and permanent injunction enjoining each Defendant, its agents, employees, assigns and all persons acting in concert or participating with each Defendant, from manufacturing, packaging, distributing, marketing and/or selling THE PRODUCTS for sale or use in California without first providing clear and reasonable warnings, within the meaning of Proposition 65, that the users and/or handlers of THE PRODUCTS are exposed to the lead;

B. An injunctive order, pursuant to H&S Code §25249.7(b), compelling Defendants to identify and locate each individual who has purchased the PRODUCTS, and to provide a warning to such person that the use of the PRODUCTS will expose the user to chemicals known to cause cancer, birth defects, and other reproductive harm.

C. An assessment of civil penalties against Defendant, pursuant to Health & Safety Code §25249.7(b), in the amount of \$2,500 per day for each violation of Proposition 65;

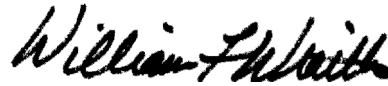
D. An award to Plaintiff of its reasonable attorney fees pursuant to California Code of Civil Procedure §1021.5 or the substantial benefit theory;

E. An award of costs of suit herein; and

F. Such other and further relief as may be just and proper.

Dated: February 4, 2013

WRAITH LAW



By: _____
WILLIAM F. WRAITH
Attorney for Plaintiff Environmental
Research Center