

Testimony to the Board of Forestry
Submitted by Lisa Arkin, Executive Director, Oregon Toxics Alliance
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Oregon Toxics Alliance (OTA) is a full-time, statewide organization whose mission is to protect and enhance community and environmental health by promoting solutions to the root causes of toxic pollution. OTA acts upon our belief that Oregonians must prioritize a child's well-being as the standard by which public health decisions are made.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide public input on the development of policy priorities for the upcoming biennium. Protecting Oregonians, particularly children, from pesticide exposure, should be a priority for the Board of Forestry and ODF. Governor Kulongoski has made toxics use reduction one of his four top priorities, and has specifically singled out the need to reduce exposures to pesticides for all school children. The Senate also established a legislative Workgroup focused on eliminating children's exposures to pesticides at and near schools. ODF has representatives on both the Governor's Agency Task Force and the Senate Workgroup. Oregon Toxics Alliance expects the BOF and ODF to align their policies with those of Oregon's Governor and the consensus recommendations of the Workgroup.

Accordingly, Oregon Toxics Alliance recommends two priorities that should be given precedence in your policy planning.

1. Mandatory buffers for schools and homes to protect them from aerial spray (minimum 1/2 mile).
2. No EPA Restricted herbicides or those known to be carcinogens, neurotoxins or mutagens shall be used in our forests.

Following is a discussion of these recommendations in more detail:

Mandatory buffers for schools/homes to protect against drift from aerial spray applications (1/2 mile)

Fact: Our current regulatory system bases policy decisions on the risk assessment model that asks the question: *how much public health and environmental harm is acceptable taking into account the current economic paradigm?* In terms of the use of herbicides in our forests, risk assessment allows timber companies to give more weight to ~~the~~ business costs than to externalized costs of environmental degradation and human health impacts.

This is particularly true when we look into the problem of aerial applications of herbicides and the effects of off-target drift on rural schools and residences. According to documents published by the Oregon State University, *drift is unavoidable*. Aerial applications of herbicides increase the likelihood that off-target drift will occur due to weather conditions, steep slopes, changing wind directions and pilot error.

Problem: The problem is that Oregonians who live in rural areas on land zoned for rural residential uses receive frequent exposures to forestry herbicides from aerial applications. Testimonies from all over our state provide vivid accounts of the illness, prolonged illness interrupting a parent ability to provide for their family, and property damage – all attributed to herbicide drift. There is also evidence that aerial applications are being carried out near schools and school bus stops, increasing the risk that school children will be exposed to pesticide drift. As more science data becomes available about the human and environmental health impacts of exposure to herbicides, we are learning that our regulatory guidelines are inadequate to mitigate the problem.

Solutions: The Board of Forestry must provide a policy framework and guidelines for reducing the risk of aerial spray drift near schools and homes. Aerial herbicide spray presents an environmental health risk that is unnecessary, and for which viable alternatives exist. That makes it an unacceptable risk. A new policy framework should be based upon:

- Full-cost accounting, i.e., all foreseeable costs, including public health, environmental health, health care costs, and the accumulation of chemicals in our rivers and soils;
- Implementation of proven Integrated Vegetation Management protocols;
- Participation in the DEQ-OSU Pesticide Stewardship Partnership program which promotes Best Management Practices for large-scale pesticide users;
- Require reasonably sized buffer zones of ½ mile for schools and residences.

The BOF should devote its work over the next few years to a phase-out of all aerial herbicide spray in Oregon's forests.

No EPA Restricted Herbicides or those known to be carcinogens or mutagens shall be used in our forests.

Fact: There is growing scientific evidence that environmental factors such as herbicides are strongly linked to many chronic diseases such as asthma, birth defects, and cancers in humans, and toxic impacts in fish and amphibians.

Other governments have taken action to limit the use of herbicides. For example Ontario will join Quebec to become the second province to formally ban the so-called "cosmetic use" of pest control products on residential lawns, gardens and parks.

Businesses are also heeding the public's call for protections from herbicide use. Canada's Home Depot, one of Canada's largest retailers, says it will voluntarily stop selling traditional pesticides and herbicides by the end of the year and will replace these products with less environmentally harmful alternatives.

Problem: One recent case serves to illustrate the problem:

An Oregon timber company filed a notice with ODF to spray Atrazine 4L, an EPA Restricted Pesticide, with helicopters on more than 330 acres of forestland within 66 feet of perennial waterways during the early spring. Much of the acreage was on steep slopes and spring run-off would carry the Atrazine directly into streams at the bottom of the slopes. The acreage is directly adjacent to rural residential land on the boundary of a major urban center; all of these homes get their drinking water from springs and wells. Various aspects of the spray notification appeared to violate the product label. Citizen complaints went un-answered by ODF, who allowed the plan to be filed and did not require the applicator to obey the label requirements.

Solutions: We urge the BOF to call for policies that eliminate the use of EPA Restricted herbicides, and any herbicide that is a known or suspected carcinogen, neurotoxin, mutagen or endocrine disruptor in our forests.

In closing, Oregon Toxics Alliance, along with other key environmental groups and representatives of all the State agencies, met with Mike Carrier, the Governor's Natural Resources advisor on two occasions to vet policy options that will move Oregon in a direction that promotes environmental health, safer alternatives to toxics and a significant reduction in toxic chemical use. DEQ, DHS and ODOT have developed policy options packages that reduce pesticides (and other toxic chemicals). However, ODF has not yet stepped up to the Governor's directive. In light of the Governor's attention to reducing toxic chemicals, and especially calling out the need to reduce pesticide exposures for children, we urge BOF to use their resources to 1) eliminate herbicides of greatest toxicity concern, and 2) establish buffer zones using Integrated Vegetation Management techniques and justified by full-cost accounting reporting.

We can no longer delay solving the problem of the destructive impacts of herbicide use in Oregon's forests.