

To the Board of Forestry Members,

A few years ago I sat before the Board of Forestry to ask a question: How do we protect ourselves from pesticide exposure when the timber industry employs helicopters to release drifting chemicals next to our homes and schools and we have no real time notification that would allow us to leave the area? I was told that could and would change – it has not. And imagine my surprise when I discovered that our own Dept of Forestry engages in that same practice? In the meantime, in response to the pleas of rural Oregonians, a 60 ft buffer is now in place around residential homes and schools – this token effort is appreciated but not exactly adequate: would you be comfortable with your child standing 60 ft from the helicopter pilot's target when the chemicals he's releasing are known to drift for miles?

I am here again today to advocate for myself and for others who wish to see an end to this careless practice. There are many in our communities who can't travel to Salem to speak before the board: like pregnant mothers who can't take a day off work to leave their jobs and families to testify. Some of them will even have family members who work in the timber industry – they want the industry to thrive so their jobs remain, but they also know that their rural communities are bearing the pressure of industrial practices that put their air and water at risk. They're in a different situation from those who are here to represent the timber industry and are being paid to attend because it's required of them to do so.

We can't pretend the chemicals being used aren't dangerous – they're designed to kill living things. I would like to see their use banned outright and I wish our own Dept of Forestry would step forward to make that a state forest policy. A moratorium on aerial pesticide applications on private lands could give time for more research and reasoned rule making.

I'm sure most everyone in this room is aware of something called the precautionary principle, which states:

“When an activity raises threats of harm to the environment or human health, precautionary measures should be taken even if some cause and effect relationships are not fully established scientifically”

This principle, with roots in the DDT issue of the 60's, encourages us to be proactive in preventing harm rather than reactive – better safe than sorry instead of wait and see what happens. It seeks to place the burden of proof on the proponent instead of on the public. We have an existing law in Oregon already that embodies this idea: HB 3364, which states that pesticides should be used in a manner that minimizes risks. The practice of releasing huge amounts of potentially hazardous mixes of industrial strength biocides from high in the air within a short distance of a school playground is a dangerous practice, certainly not one that minimizes risk, and I can guarantee that if you were to take a survey of Oregonians they would agree with that statement. Yet when some citizens attempt to advocate for changes to that practice, and when some state agencies

From YK-  
2013

are willing to listen, they are discredited, branded as part of a “fringe element” and accused of conspiring to shoot down helicopters.

So how and when, if ever, is this going to change? And will anything be different the next time someone is harmed by these careless practices? From our perspective, in rural coastal communities where we see more and more of our forest cover destroyed and the soil life poisoned, it’s always more of the same. How do we know, when the Board moves to make changes to rules that govern forestry, that you will take into account the safety of those communities next to forested areas? Are you going to heed the precautionary principle and act to protect our air and water? Or will it be business as usual, where residents are left feeling that we have no rights when pitted against the opportunity for investors on the other side of the world to make greater corporate profits – corporations that are no longer required to pay their share of taxes to those communities in which they operate? The industry has changed over the years – and so should the laws that govern it. In the end, who will be responsible for harm done? It won’t be the timber industry giants – the right to farm and forest act has taken care of that. And many of our state legislators appear to be either too cowardly or too compromised to offer up anything substantial. Will the Board of Forestry take up the challenge and speak for the people who love their forests – and who demand their right to safe air and water? I hope so because someone needs to put the brakes on the use of these dangerous chemicals that are harming our children and all the creatures who depend on our forests. Let’s choose instead to proceed *with* caution instead of throwing it to the wind.

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Jane Anderson  
P.O. Box 843 / 602 Fir Ave.  
Garibaldi, OR 97118  
503-812-0059  
andersonjackjane@gmail.com