Bring it on 2016!

On a cold December night I walked into the small office on the corner of 12th and Lawrence. After being interviewed by a dozen board members for more than an hour I left the office with a sense of teetering at the edge of a cliff. The next day I was asked to take a dive into Beyond Toxics.

In my first week of work I met with rural residents who were exposed to herbicides, legislators, other environmental advocates, attorneys, meetings left and right. I was, as they say, thrown into the thick of it. I was hired primarily to lead our environmental justice campaign. Within a week I could see how much Beyond Toxics was doing and how much of a difference we were making.

As my first year with Beyond Toxics comes to a close, I'd like to share our vision for the upcoming year. It's been a blessing to be able to organize and advocate for people in my community. It has allowed me to create a platform to amplify the voices of those most vulnerable across the state.

Beyond Toxics shines a light on people who are often ignored: the vulnerable, those who are disproportionately exposed to chemicals. Sadly, their voice is not heard.

Out of our work in community came "Justice for the Land and the Worker," an event focused on seeking justice for workers. We chose southern Oregon, the heart of agriculture and forestry.

We invited the Governor’s staff, the Oregon Environmental Justice Task Force and a number of state agencies. They heard first-hand from workers who spoke about their experience with chemical exposure in the work place.

These are people with families, hopes, and dreams. The stories we heard that day were heart-wrenching, but sadly true. They are the stories I grew up hearing as my father and uncles sat around a table laughing at close calls and giving tribute to fallen workers by keeping their stories alive.

I have family who work in saw mills, planting trees, construction, house-keeping, and harvesting fruits and vegetables—men and women who raised me and made me the person I am today. They are the backbone of our economy. We need to go beyond band-aid fixes and advocate for just treatment in the workplace.

From cutting-edge events such as Justice for the Land and the Worker, to sitting down with impacted Oregonians at their kitchen tables, our work is seeded in the needs of the most vulnerable. Through their experiences, we stand ready to face the corrupting influence of money in politics. We are here to level the playing field. Beyond Toxics continues to be a champion of Environmental Justice. The odds are against the people we fight for, but Beyond Toxics is up to the challenge. We are feisty and tenacious.

Bring it on 2016!
Dear Friend,

Do you value effective and efficient grassroots organizing? If so, you and Beyond Toxics are a match!

In Oregon, we value our ecosystem and rivers, but all too often, pollution – from a myriad of sources – threatens our drinking water, salmon habitats, air quality, and health. These threats impact all of us.

In 2001 Beyond Toxics began our work by taking on Oregon’s biggest polluters and demanding stronger protections for people and the environment. From the beginning, our science-based vision was focused on social and environmental change. We advocate overturning embedded systems of unfair policies and corporate dominance that routinely shift the burden of toxic pollution onto the public.

We stand as leaders. We don’t give up, even when facing seemingly insurmountable odds.

This year, Beyond Toxics was the first and primary organization serving rural communities in their fight to hold aerial herbicide sprayers accountable. Through countless public meetings, advocacy trainings, emails, phone calls, media outreach and editorials, we brought together dozens of impacted communities to demand an end to pesticide drift.

Despite fierce opposition from big timber companies, we mobilized concerned Oregonians to come to the State Legislature. Bravely risking their jobs and community backlash, they testified about seeing their children, farm animals, and pets harmed by aerial sprays. Beyond Toxics staff and volunteers guided their advocacy with GIS maps of watersheds impacted by clear cutting and herbicides. We arranged over 50 meetings with legislators, governor’s staff, and state commissions. From Gold Beach to Roseburg to Rockaway Beach, parents and children stepped forward to tell their accounts of pain, nausea, nose bleeds, rashes, headaches, and asthma attacks after pesticides drifted over their homes and schools.

So, what is the impact of our work? Stronger laws that protect Oregonians and the environment!

In 2015, Beyond Toxics worked with Oregonians and the legislature to pass new laws regulating aerial sprays. We placed illegal toxic sprays on the front pages of Oregon media. We have always been observant watchdogs. We made sure reluctant state agencies enforced laws and grounded law-breaking helicopter sprayers. This resulted in penalties of nearly $100,000 and passage of an historic buffer bill!

Beyond Toxics is dedicated to helping people who suffer from environmental inequity.

I know you share our passion and vision to protect community health and ensure Oregon’s ecological treasures are here for future generations. Will you help us continue our effective programs to build a healthy, non-toxic Oregon? Please join us and make an end-of-the-year contribution to support some of the most dedicated and successful environmental protection work you’ll find anywhere.

Sincerely,

Lisa Arkin, Executive Director

You can donate using the enclosed gift envelope or by going online: www.BeyondToxics.org.

P.S. Beyond Toxics is a grassroots, community-focused non-profit. Your donation makes a significant difference in our ability to advocate on your behalf. Consider a gift membership.
Beyond Toxics promised you, our members and supporters, that we would doggedly pursue the issue of herbicide drift! In 2015, we've been laser-focused on ending the use of aerial sprays in forests. In fact, we made it one of the Oregon Legislature’s top topics of debate in the 2015 session. Organizing in rural communities and using newly revealed data helped us significantly raise the level of public awareness.

Today we are at the crossroads of a new era of environmental reform. The evidence of harm is clear, both from traditional science and corroborating personal narratives of people throughout Oregon. It is critical that we demand pesticide protections, especially for children. Kids are very susceptible to harm because exposures to small doses of pesticides can disrupt cell growth and normal organ development. We can and must do more to protect children from the possibility of “lifelong consequences” from these environmental exposures, a warning directly issued by the EPA.

Just ask Jenn and James Ruppert whose four children were sickened by exposure to a tank mix of chemicals from no less than 10 aerial herbicide sprays carried out within two miles of their school in Lane County – on the first day of the school year. Imagine young children trying to acclimate to their new classroom with headaches, respiratory congestion and nausea. All four children, as well as Jenn, had to be taken to doctors. Knowing that kids at schools may be victims of lasting harm from pesticide drift motivates Beyond Toxics to take a strong stand against toxic chemicals in our environment. I thought of the Ruppert family and felt a sense of relief when Oregon Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum clearly recognized the risk of harm. In her request for an injunction for an Oregon helicopter spray company, our State’s attorney said:

“The State of Oregon will suffer irreparable harm … The joint investigation found that Applebee Aviation … performed pesticide activities in a faulty, careless or negligent manner, thereby seriously endangering worker health and safety and presenting a serious risk to the public.”

[Oregon Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum October, 2015]

Despite the recognition of extreme risk, timber lobbyists showed no compassion when Beyond Toxics recommended a no-spray buffer zone for homes and schools at the Legislature. Their lobbyist retorted that …

Our industry cannot agree to any buffers around schools, because, frankly, we don’t see a benefit for our bottom line.

That is the kind of deceitful and cynical argument Beyond Toxics fights against every day. Beyond Toxics has elevated narratives of those most impacted over the industry’s stale excuses for spraying poisons. Our goal is to expose the underbelly of corporate greed that fuels the reckless use of herbicides.

Regardless of heavy lobbying and rhetoric from the timber and chemical lobbyists, Beyond Toxics and our members and allies succeeded in getting new standards of environmental health into the outdated Oregon Forest Practices Act.

The three top reforms we achieved are steps in the right direction:

1. Mandatory no-spray buffers around homes and schools (60 ft.);
2. Mandatory 24-hour hotline for pesticide complaints—agencies held accountable to respond;
3. Pesticide applicators spraying from helicopters must have special training and licensing.

Like David, the public’s voice and our strategy confronted Goliath and won the day!

We have a strategic plan to stop aerial herbicide spraying near homes, schools, wildlife habitat and in any watershed that provides drinking water. We are going door-to-door to speak with Oregonians about this issue. So far, we’ve gathered over 4500 signatures on a petition to demand that Governor Kate Brown take action to protect Oregon’s drinking water from forestry herbicides.

We need your support to come back to the legislature in 2017 and fully address the problem of aerial pesticide spraying and stop the havoc it causes to our health and Oregon’s ecosystems. Take a stand with us!
2001 – Oregon Toxics Alliance formed by Mary O’Brien, Anita Johnson, Michael Carrigan, Steve Johnson & others.

2001-2003 Lisa Arkin and David Monk hired as staff.

2003 – Defended residents from dangers of toxic ground water plume in Trainsong and River Road neighborhoods. Forced Union Pacific to reimburse families for the loss of access to well water and to test air quality in homes.

2005-2006 – Launched “Healthy Air Oregon” and achieved a statewide ban on the practice of topping off gas tanks to reduce carcinogens and air pollution.

2006 – Petitioned Oregon Health Authority (OHA) to perform a cancer cluster study in West Eugene, resulting in a finding of increased lung cancers.

2007 – Launched the Ban on Grass Seed Field Burning Campaign. Approached the issue as an environmental health problem based on asthma in rural communities.

2008 – Published “Warning! Hazards to Children: Pesticides in Oregon’s Schools,” exposing 43 student/teacher poisonings.

2009 – Led the way to pass SB 637, the strongest School Pesticide Reduction in the nation. ♦ Beyond Toxics and Western Environmental Law Center collaborated to pass SB 528, banning field burning in the Valley. We published the first report on hazards of burning pesticide-contaminated grass stubble.

2010 – Launched the West Eugene Environmental Justice Campaign in response to thousands of complaints of air pollution and asthma.

2011 – Fought against lax air pollution permits for Seneca Biomass and JH Baxter Chemical Plant in West Eugene. ♦ Environmental Justice Coordinator Alison Guzman taught 25 Spanish language asthma workshops and gave out 500 “green” non-toxic cleaning kits.
Looking Back, Moving Forward! – Celebrating 15 years of activism

Published “Assessing Environmental Impact for Pesticide Use on State Highways” report, resulting in new ODOT policy to reduce pesticide use by 25% statewide.

2012 – Organized Oregon’s first Environmental Justice Bus Tour, leading to ground-breaking pollution and health policies. Published “Environmental Justice in West Eugene: Families, Health and Air Pollution.”

Forced Union Pacific to clean up illegally-dumped hazardous waste in wetlands, resulting in a massive clean-up.

2013 – We led the way to pass HB 3364, requiring state agencies to use safer alternatives to pesticides.

Provided local leadership for the Stop Coal Campaign, ending plans to build a coal export terminal in Coos Bay.

Published “Oregon’s Industrial Forests and Herbicide Use: A Case Study of Risk to People, Drinking Water and Salmon.” This ground-breaking report launched a statewide campaign to reform the Oregon Forest Practices Act.

2014-2015 - Held townhalls, reaching over a thousand people in rural communities, encouraging local leadership to challenge aerial herbicide spraying.

Passed bans on the use of neonicotinoid pesticides on city property in both Eugene and Portland.

2015 – Held Aerial Herbicide Spray Lobby Day to launch the Ban Aerial Spray campaign. Beyond Toxics led the way to pass HB 3549, the first law to reform the Oregon Forest Practices Act, embedding human health principles.

Organized “Justice for the Land and the Worker.” Invited state officials and the media to hear from workers exposed to chemicals in the workplace. The recommendations from workers were delivered directly to the Governor.
Welcome new Beyond Toxics Board Members!
We’re grateful you are adding your knowledge to Beyond Toxics!

**Jackie Mayorga**
Jackie Mayorga is a first generation student at the University of Oregon. After completing her K-12 education in Salem, she enrolled at the UO where she is earning a double major in International Studies and Sociology and seeking a double minor in Spanish and Environmental Studies. She is a Co-director for The Coalition Against Environmental Racism (CAER), a member of El Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlan (MEChA), and a Mentor for Intercultural Mentoring Program Advancing Community Ties (IMPACT).

“I care about Environmental Justice because it has affected my family and our communities for a long time. Working for Environmental Justice is a way that I can provide change in communities to make them safe and clean for everyone regardless of the neighborhood or city they live in.”

**Don Francis**
Don Francis grew up in the Oregon communities of Sutherlin, Springfield and Corvallis. Don worked with the Black United Front and the International Refugee Center of Oregon to post signs along the Columbia Slough and distribute several thousand multilingual pamphlets warning about toxicity levels in the fish people were feeding their families. He later worked for the Urban League of Portland as an Environmental Justice Community Organizer. In 1996, Don started Willamette Riverkeeper. Don founded EcoTech, an environmental contracting and consulting company. He resides in NE Portland with his wife and two children.

“As a longtime community advocate, I've always admired the environmental justice approach Beyond Toxics takes.”

**Abel Cerros**
Abel Cerros is a first generation student at the University of Oregon majoring in Ethnic Studies. He is currently serving his second year as a co-director for the UO Coalition Against Environmental Racism (CAER). He holds ASUO Senate Seat 20, helping distribute more than $14 million in student funds to groups on campus.

“As CAER expands their community outreach and collaboration with Beyond Toxics, I look forward to developing environmental justice tools which I can use at home in Fort Worth, Texas.”

**Diego Contreras**
Diego Contreras is currently a Ph.D. candidate in the sociology department at the University of Oregon. Prior to coming to Oregon, Diego was a Sociologist in Mexico City where he received his Bachelor’s degree from the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM, in spanish). Diego is interested in how pesticides affect the health and well-being of farmworkers working in vineyards.

“My overall research interests are in the sociology of culture, international migration and photography. I came to Oregon to learn more about the conditions of migrant workers. By serving as a board member, I know I can contribute to the work on migrants and their environmental conditions.”
Climate Justice and Pollution: It’s all related!

During Oregon’s recent cold snap, residents were shivering with temperatures below 25 degrees. At the same time, the air grew stagnant. Pollution levels exceeded national health standards. In the Willamette Valley, the pollution levels went into the red zone. Put simply – that much pollution means it hurts to breathe for those most vulnerable. Our kids, our elderly and those suffering from heart and lung ailments are at risk. An Oregon Air Protection Agency issued a lengthy burn ban—no visible smoke is allowed from a chimney at a home—to reverse the pollution.

Serious health risks come from breathing air saturated with particulate pollutants from wood smoke and industry. These are airborne bits of hazardous toxins so small that they can cross from the lungs into the bloodstream, causing cancer, asthma and heart disease.

Many residents depend on wood stoves and fireplaces to keep warm and reduce their energy consumption. With a burn ban in place, people have to buy electricity for heating. The irony is that in Oregon communities with air quality problems, such as Eugene and Medford, some electricity facilities are polluting a lot. Woody biomass incineration is a major pollution source, yet these facilities are allowed to ignore the burn ban.

So a family obeying a burn ban for homes may be forced to buy energy from a big polluter. This is a climate justice problem. In a vexingly circular scenario, families pay high prices for electricity generated by facilities polluting the air they breathe.

In addition to air pollution, biomass combustion is a major source of greenhouse gases. Compared to energy production using fossil fuels, per megawatt, woody biomass burning emits 1.5 times the carbon dioxide. Biomass is a double hit because the trees logged for biomass once served as a carbon sink.

Beyond Toxics wants to ensure that biomass energy is produced in ways that not only reduce global warming pollution, but also protect the environment. We led two campaigns to challenge woody biomass facilities and encourage higher standards for sustainable energy sources. Included in the equation is the harm from herbicide use and exposing downwind communities to thousands of tons of hazardous air pollutants.

The new climate action slogan, “Keep it in the Ground,” shouldn’t only refer to ending mining and fracking of fossil fuels. We must not rip Oregon’s forests out of the earth to send to a biomass plant for incineration.

Our victories are made possible by the hard work and financial support of many people...

Thank you so much!

Inara Fernandez

Inara is a graduating MA student in International Studies at UO. She has been BT’s Environmental Justice intern since June and has worked with Joel on outreach efforts in West Eugene. She hopes that her internship will help her jumpstart a career in environmental justice and community development either domestically or abroad.

Natalie Hardwicke

Natalie is a University of Oregon junior studying journalism and environmental studies. She has worked as a Photography intern at Beyond Toxics on various photography and graphics assignments. Although her internship is ending this month, she intends to continue volunteering at Beyond Toxics and promoting the values of environmental justice.
Beyond Toxics weaves social justice and human rights advocacy into environmental protection policies.