

# The Register-Guard

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## ENVIRONMENT

# Willamalane to end use of most toxic pesticides at Dorris Ranch orchards

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Orchards at Dorris Ranch will no longer be treated with certain powerful pesticides.

The Willamalane Parks and Recreation District Board of Directors voted Wednesday to stop using its most potent forms of pest and disease management at the historic filbert orchards on Dorris Ranch in Springfield. The move follows a summer of concerns about pesticide use there and a committee's recommendation to switch to organic practices.

"I am proud of the fact that we received feedback from the community and as a result, we will implement practices which are more environmentally sound. Willamalane has always been committed to being good stewards of the environment, and reviewing our integrated pest management programs will continue moving forward," Willamalane Superintendent Michael Wargo said in a statement.

**Previous coverage:** Willamalane may adopt organic management practices at Dorris Ranch after pesticide use concerns

The board left a decision about switching to organic practices for later, asking staff to do research on how the park would be affected, according to spokesman Kenny Weigandt.

Weigandt said the board wanted to know how many additional days the park might need to be closed each year to accommodate organic treatment and what the cost would be.

The use of pesticides at Dorris Ranch, where Willamalane runs a commercial orchard of 9,250 filbert trees on 75 acres, came under scrutiny this summer. The board created an advisory committee that recommended using organic practices to maintain the trees.

"I was really happy with the outcome," said Lisa Arkin, executive director of the nonprofit Beyond Toxics and a member of the advisory committee. "Willamalane is on its way to becoming a model of how to protect the public while managing a orchard within a park."

Willamalane will immediately stop using pesticides from the two most toxic categories assigned by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency at Dorris Ranch, Weigandt said.

The filbert orchards were most recently treated with such chemicals in August. The orchards are next scheduled for treatment in spring.

**Industry impact:** Sen. Ron Wyden addresses need to protect Oregon's Christmas tree industry

The pesticides Willamalane will no longer use include Bravo, Ziram and Asana. The park district will continue to use 2-4 D and glyphosate, which are from a less toxic category.

Orchard management is conducted on contract at Dorris Ranch, and the orchardist told Willamalane staff he could continue to treat the trees without those chemicals, Weigandt said. The orchardist will be included in planning the park's future management, he said.

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