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Poisoned Pines In Central Oregon To Be Cut

by **Emily Cureton** (</contributor/emily-cureton/>) [Follow](#) OPB Feb. 13, 2019 6:15 a.m. | Updated: Feb. 13, 2019 8:44 a.m. | Sisters, Ore.

The U.S. Forest Service has finalized a decision to fell about 2,100 poisoned pines in the Deschutes National Forest along Highway 20, where officials have long worried about hazard trees falling over on the road.

“Our primary objective is to mitigate a public safety hazard, and our No. 1 priority is getting the trees down,” said Ian Reid, Sisters District ranger with the Forest Service.

The trees died from exposure to herbicide. The federal plan is to turn them into forest products, but proposed state regulations may prevent that from happening.

State contractors inadvertently killed (<https://www.opb.org/news/article/odot-ponderosa-pine-pesticide-logging-sisters-highway-20/>) the mature ponderosa pines with herbicide meant to control weeds, applied from 2011 until 2015. At that time, aminocyclopyrachlor, or ACP, was widely applied to rights of way in Oregon and the Pacific Northwest. The compound had already been linked to tree deaths

(<https://www.nytimes.com/2011/07/15/science/earth/15herbicide.html>) in other states and was even pulled from the market under one brand name until it reappeared through a different manufacturer, and again got federal approval from the Environmental Protection Agency for use on roadsides.

ACP moves through soil and water, into the roots of trees. After a few years of applications, the road to Sisters changed. Centuries-old ponderosa pines died; some of them hundreds of feet from where spraying occurred. The number of affected trees has grown in recent years.

After public complaints and pressure from the advocacy group Beyond Toxics (<https://www.beyondtoxics.org/>), the Oregon Department of Agriculture ordered a temporary stop to ACP (<https://www.opb.org/news/article/oregon-washington-bans-tree-killing->

herbicide-investigation/) applications on roadsides and other rights of way in 2018. In January, ODA proposed making the rule permanent and added a prohibition on milling wood from ACP exposed trees. That's because it's not entirely clear how the compound lingers and moves in the environment.

ODA's rule could be finalized by the end of March before the Forest Service timber harvest near Sisters takes place during its planned April start. Reid said the agencies are in communication.

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