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19 Environmental Groups Join Push For Stricter Oregon Pesticide Spraying Rules

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Ever since residents in a Southern Oregon community near [Gold Beach](#) claimed weed killer sprayed from a helicopter poisoned them in late 2013, the Eugene-based environmental group Beyond Toxics has been pushing hard for stricter rules governing aerial spraying.

Now it has company.

Nineteen environmental groups signed a letter this week urging Oregon legislators to adopt tighter rules for spraying weed killer on the state's forests. The groups range from local watershed alliances to Oregon Wild and the Sierra Club.

"We have groups who care about wildlife. We have groups that care about ecological health in general. We have groups that care about air quality. And all of these groups help us explain why this practice is so damaging," Beyond Toxics Director Lisa Arkin said.

The environmental groups are asking the legislature for the following:

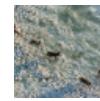
- Creation of buffers around homes and schools where spraying is prohibited.
- Expansion buffers around streams that serve as fish habitat and drinking water sources.
- Creation of a system for timely alerts to residents about planned spraying.
- Open access to records of what pesticides have been sprayed, including when, where and in what quantities.
- Resources and jurisdiction for the Oregon Health Authority to investigate incidents of human exposure to pesticide spraying.

A group of legislators led by Senator Michael Dembrow, D-Portland, has been [drafting a bill](#) expected to address the same targets outlined by environmental groups. In May, following the Oregon Department of Agriculture's investigation into the Gold Beach incident and [subsequent revelations about the state's flawed response](#), Dembrow began a series of hearings as chair of the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee.

Forest herbicide spraying has been a contentious issue in Oregon for decades. Timber companies spray after logging to reduce competition for the next crop of trees and spraying from helicopters is more efficient than weeding or spraying by hand. But environmentalists have argued for years that Oregon's regulation of the practice is more lax than other states, and residents in rural communities across the western half of the state have made claims about the health effects of herbicide exposure.

Timber industry groups have been vocal against efforts to increase regulation, claiming the problems alleged by environmental groups are those of perception rather than actual risk to human health or

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the environment.

“It seems like the efforts right now are searching for solutions when we haven’t really identified a problem that’s out there, other than perception,” Scott Dahlman, executive director of Oregonians for Food and Shelter, said earlier in January. “We just want to make sure we’re not taking Draconian steps to address something we haven’t even identified yet.”

Others within the timber industry [have expressed support for new rules](#), saying that most herbicide applications pose no threat, but that the current system doesn’t do enough to address spraying that does become problematic.

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CascadeCin · a day ago

The practice is downright barbaric. The fact that humans, pets and livestock are harmed when the sprayer strays off course means that wildlife, from the smallest pollinators to larger mammals are undoubtedly harmed. Poison falls from the sky and the ODF makes it hard for landowners NOT to spray. Disgusting.

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spiralmom · 2 days ago

It's really too bad that another community had to be poisoned after Triangle Lake citizens proved there is harm being done. Yet nothing has happened to STOP people from being exposed. So more communities are going to be exposed!! Buffer Zones are worthless...even Tyrone Hayes said himself that they don't work. Pesticides go off target. The only way to save Oregon Citizens... and the environment we depend on, is to BAN aerial spraying of pesticides!! Anything less will not work. We need to stop bowing down to the timber king in Oregon. The only reason this has been an issue for so long is that the conventional environmental groups wouldn't touch it - too political. And now that they are speaking up finally, they need to be TELLING timber to STOP spraying.. it's NOT needed. Our Federal Forests are an example of not needing aerial spraying. Timber is where the money is... so Oregon will always cater to them... make timber pay more taxes!!!!

^ | v · Reply · Share



worldly12 · 3 days ago

It's downright immoral for chemical industry to say the health risks from pesticides are only "perception." Immoral and a lie and Oregonians are sick and tired of this total lack of action in the name of biased science. Public health and safety – and the quality of our clean water, ecosystems, wildlife habitat, etc. – are not partisan issues and lawmakers can get behind rules that protect us. Dahlman should get a conscience.

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