

Senate OKs bill to boost pesticide alternatives on state-owned lands

Written by Peter Wong Statesman Journal
May. 27

statesmanjournal.com

Gov. John Kitzhaber is the final stop for a bill that requires state agencies to minimize their use of pesticides, coordinate their efforts and find alternatives on state-owned lands.

The Senate gave final legislative approval to House Bill 3364 today on a 24-6 vote. It did not amend the bill.

The bill sets up a state council on integrated pest management, which will be led by someone designated by the College of Agricultural Sciences at Oregon State University. The council members will represent state agencies involved in pest control, require them to develop integrated pest management plans, and coordinate their work.

Oregon would be the first in the nation to set up a council covering all state agencies. The bill's requirements apply only to state agency operations on state-owned lands.

The legislation builds on a 2012 executive order by Kitzhaber for agencies to use "green" methods to control pests wherever possible. It also builds on 2009 legislation requiring integrated pest management plans for schools and surrounding areas.

"Toxic chemicals put our children at risk," said Sen. Laurie Monnes Anderson, D-Gresham, and the chief Senate sponsor of the bill. "They should not be used on state and public grounds with attempting alternative means of pest control."

The bill's other chief sponsor was Rep. Alissa Keny-Guyer, D-Portland.

It was backed by Beyond Toxics, a statewide group based in Eugene.

But the original bill was amended to remove a proposed requirement for 24-hour notice before chemicals could be applied – the requirement could be complied with by posting on an agency website – and to remove a requirement for recordkeeping of what is used, where and when it is used, and how much. The new council will study these and other topics.

According to a draft report by Beyond Toxics, based on records it obtained from three state agencies, 26 of Oregon's 36 counties obtained state grants for weed control involving pesticides between 2008 and the present. Just under two-thirds of the 627 applications obtained by the group originated in four southern counties: Douglas, Josephine, Klamath and Lane.

Among the top herbicides reported in use were Picloram and 2, 4-D, both used as defoliants during the Vietnam War. An effort to ban 2, 4-D failed last year when the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency declined to restrict the popular weed killer.

"But I think there is a lot more awareness, and more data that have been done, to link the consequences of pesticides and harmful chemicals to cancers," Keny-Guyer said.

After a March 8 news conference at the Capitol, Keny-Guyer furnished estimates that environmentally related diseases cost \$1.3 billion annually in Oregon, and the bulk of that (\$1 billion) affecting children. For adult and childhood cancers, the total was \$131 million.

The figures were drawn from a 2010 study by Rene Hackenmiller-Paradis and Stephanie Bernell published in the journal Local Environment. The article is “The Price of Pollution: Costs and Estimates of Environmentally Related Disease in Oregon.”

pwong@StatesmanJournal.com or (503) 399-6745 or twitter.com/capitolwong