



Bill that aims to cut pesticide use by Oregon state agencies gains support

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A bill that aims to minimize pesticide use on state-owned property is gaining momentum in Oregon's Legislature, with a group that represents pesticide manufacturers and applicators endorsing an amended version today.

[House Bill 3364](#) would require "integrated pest management" for state programs such as invasive weed control and on public property from forests to universities to roadsides.

State agencies would unify efforts and measure results under a new interagency committee headed by [Oregon State University's Paul Jepson](#), the state's IPM coordinator since 2002.

IPM allows selective use of herbicides and insecticides. But it requires evaluation of alternatives, including mechanical and biological controls and consideration of acceptable levels of insects and weeds.

[Beyond Toxics](#) in Eugene drove the bill, collecting pesticide data that showed Vietnam-era defoliants being heavily used in state weed-control programs. Rep. [Alissa Keny-Guyer](#), D-Portland, the bill's chief sponsor, spearheaded compromises with potential opponents.

Backers stress that the bill would not affect private lands or outlaw pesticides.

"It's not a ban on pesticides," said Lisa Arkin, Beyond Toxics' executive director. "But, hopefully, (pesticide use) will be more selective and we'll look at alternatives first."

The bill got a boost this morning, when Scott Dahlman, executive director of [Oregonians for Food and Shelter](#), told the House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources that his group now supports an amended version.

The group, a powerful lobbying force in Salem, includes forest and farm representatives and pesticide manufacturers, distributors and applicators. It participated in recent discussions involving Gov. [John Kitzhaber](#)'s office and the bill's supporters.

The bill's first version allowed "the use of low-impact pesticides if nonchemical pest control measures are ineffective." It barred routine use of carcinogenic pesticides and those with high toxicity to fish, animals and

beneficial insects, such as bees.

The [latest version](#) eliminates those details and includes "selective use of pesticides" among a list of techniques to be considered. It calls for both preventing "unacceptable levels of pest damage" and for pesticide use that "poses the least possible risk to people, property, resources and the environment."

"We must ensure that all tools are available to be able to manage pests," Dahlman told the committee, "and we believe the (revised definition) does allow for that."

If the bill passes, Jepson of OSU would head a state coordinating committee that would meet three times a year. Among other tasks, the committee would analyze the developing science around pest management and human health and environmental risks.

It would develop performance metrics to measure pesticide use and the toxicity of the chemicals used under state agency authority. And it would develop standards for posting warnings before pesticide applications on public land and in public buildings.

The bill comes after a 2010 study found deficiencies in training, coordination and implementation of the state's pesticide programs, and little assessment of their impact.

It also draws on success stories in Oregon and Washington. In Oregon, a state-funded pesticide partnership helped farmers around Hood River cut pesticide use significantly. Washington state's Department of Transportation used an IPM approach to cut pesticide use 70 percent between 2003 and 2008.

Beyond environmental groups, the bill's backers include Portland area's [Metro](#) regional government, the [Oregon Commission for Women](#) and some pesticide applicators and pediatricians.

In a letter to the committee, [Randall Phelps, a developmental and behavioral pediatrician at Oregon Health and Science University](#), said children exposed before birth to low chemical doses are particularly vulnerable.

Studies indicate that children exposed prenatally to common pesticides have abnormal newborn reflexes, he said, lower scores on cognitive testing at 3 years of age, increased symptoms of poor attention and of hyperactivity, and increased autism symptoms.

-- Scott Learn