

Eugene business executive to help lead ballot campaign against aerial herbicide spraying

An executive at Eugene-based Mountain Rose Herbs has signed on to help spearhead a ballot initiative to halt the aerial spraying of herbicides on Oregon forests, the initiative group announced Wednesday.

Shawn Donville, vice president at Mountain Rose Herbs, has joined a coalition of conservation groups as chief petitioners on ballot initiatives asking voters to ban helicopter herbicide spraying and toughen other aspects of Oregon's forest laws.

Mountain Rose Herbs, based in west Eugene, employs nearly 200 workers. The company blends and sells herbal teas, spices, bath items and other products.

Here's the news release from the coalition:

Ballot Initiatives to Halt Aerial Pesticide Sprays, Reform Logging Practices Move Forward

Business owners, concerned citizens, and conservation groups submit signatures to protect clean water and public health from Oregon's weak logging laws

EUGENE – Today, three proposed ballot initiatives to protect public health, clean water, and forests moved one step closer to a statewide vote. Over one thousand signatures were gathered and submitted to the Oregon Secretary of State's office supporting initiatives changing Oregon's Forest Practices Act to better protect Oregon's drinking water from aerial pesticide sprays, and reform other industrial logging practices that threaten public health and safety.

Shawn Donville, Vice President of the organic products company Mountain Rose Herbs based in Lane County and employing nearly 200, and Kate Taylor, a fishing guide and resident of Tillamook County, have joined a coalition of conservation groups as Chief Petitioners on ballot initiatives asking voters to ban the logging industry's practice of using helicopters to apply toxic pesticides, and reform other aspects of Oregon's forest laws. The measures come after an effort to strengthen forestry rules in the 2015 session in Salem failed in the face of well-funded opposition by the logging and pesticide industries, despite public outrage over numerous examples of pesticide sprays contaminating private property and exposing families to cancer-causing chemicals.

"Oregon's weak logging and aerial spray rules endanger Oregon's drinking water and the health of our families, and they are a direct threat to the state's organic agriculture industry," said Shawn Donville. "Mountain Rose Herbs has lost hundreds of thousands of dollars because of pesticide contamination. This is a very real threat to the livelihood of Oregon's organic farmers, and it has to stop." In 2014 alone, Donville's company was forced to destroy over \$300,000 worth of products because of contamination by pesticide residue.

Oregon's forest laws, written by industry lobbyists, also have very real and detrimental impacts on the health of communities. In one example, the watershed where the community of Rockaway Beach, Oregon gets its drinking water has been 80% clearcut in the past 15 years, and sprayed repeatedly with toxic chemicals. Public health agencies have discouraged residents of Rockaway from drinking their tap water due to contamination.

"Oregon's outdated rules around aerial spraying and clearcutting in drinking watersheds puts our communities, our

salmon and steelhead runs, and our families at risk,” said Kate Taylor, owner of Frigate Travel, and resident of Rockaway Beach. “The Oregon legislature has failed to protect our communities from these practices, and so we are turning to the ballot initiative process.”

Initiative Petition (IP) 78 would ban the aerial application of pesticides, herbicides and fungicides for forestry purposes in any watershed that is a source of drinking water, and near any home or school. Statewide polling conducted in 2015 showed that a strong majority of Oregonians supported an outright ban on this practice by the logging industry. State-wide, the poll found 67 percent support a ban, with 53 percent of rural residents supporting such a measure. The US Forest Service instituted a ban on the practice two decades ago out of concern for the health of their workers and residents.

“Many Oregonians testified to legislators that the sound of an approaching helicopter was the only warning they got before a toxic chemical spray happened near their home,” said Lisa Arkin, Executive Director of Beyond Toxics. “There is nothing radical about wanting to protect your family and property from a logging company that intends to spray cancer-causing chemicals near your house.”

While also addressing concerns over aerial spraying, the other two initiatives each go a step further. IP 79 adds new restrictions to logging on steep slopes to prevent clearcuts from destabilizing hillsides that threaten families and communities with landslides. IP 80 bans the detrimental practice of clearcut logging by requiring that timber operators leave 50 trees per acre in Western Oregon, and 15 trees per acre in Eastern Oregon.

The signatures submitted to the Secretary of State Election Division for each of three proposed ballot initiatives moves the campaign into its next phase. These signatures will now be verified by the Elections Division, followed by the Attorney General’s drafting of ballot titles that impartially summarize the petitions and their major effects.