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Legislation In Works For Oregon Herbicide Spraying

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Oregon State Rep. Ann Lininger, D-Lake Oswego (third from left) talks with concerned citizens and herbicide applicators at an event in Triangle Lake, Oregon. | credit: Tony Schick | [rollover image for more](#)

WAYPOINTS blog

After talking about poor oversight of aerial herbicide spraying on Oregon forests, there's a chance state lawmakers might actually do something about it.

Rep. Ann Lininger, D-Lake Oswego, joined a community workshop Saturday organized by advocacy group Beyond Toxics. While there, Lininger said she and others in Salem were drafting legislation on the issue.

"There is a cadre of people in the legislature who want to make things better," Lininger told a cheering crowd of about 50 people. "Because this matters."

Lininger said Monday she has been working on legislation for the past six months along with Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee Chairman Michael Dembrow, D-Portland, and a team of legislators and community members. They plan to introduce a bill in the 2015 session.

Goals for the legislation include:

- **Better notifications for community members** who want to know when and where sprays are happening so they can protect themselves accordingly. [Current notifications](#) are costly, vague and sometimes inaccurate.
- **Creating a publicly accessible database of pesticide application records**, which show what was actually applied, how much, where and when. Currently, such records are [maintained by applicators, filed with no one and are sometimes inconsistent or missing altogether](#).
- **Wider buffers between aerial spraying and homes, schools, and drinking water streams.** Oregon currently has no buffer for homes and schools and streamside buffers much

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smaller than neighboring states. Bigger buffer zones have been a goal of environmental groups for years.

The Senate committee has held a series of informational hearings since May in response to a case last year near Gold Beach. Dozens of residents in the community of Cedar Valley claimed herbicides sprayed from a helicopter made them and their pets sick. The pilot faces a \$10,000 fine and the state is trying to revoke his license. The next hearing is scheduled for December.

Those hearings began after the state released its findings in April and a subsequent [EarthFix investigation revealed major gaps in state oversight of forestry herbicide applications](#), including failure to provide communities adequate notice about nearby spraying and investigations rife with miscommunication and missed opportunities, incapable of answering basic questions about human exposure. An independent expert referred to the state's investigations as "using a wet mop to dust for fingerprints."

Oregon Department of Agriculture sampling in Cedar Valley showed trace amounts of herbicide on some Cedar Valley properties.

Acute toxicity for the chemicals involved is typically considered low and short-lived during a one-time exposure, but several residents claimed severe and long-lasting symptoms including blurred vision, joint pain, difficulty breathing, coughing blood, irregular heartbeats, and heart attacks. Others in Cedar Valley say the deaths of their animals are connected to the spray incident.

The issue of aerial spraying has pitted rural Oregonians against the timber industry for 30 years. On Saturday, residents from Klamath, Douglas and Lane counties joined members of the Cedar Valley community in voicing their experience with herbicide spraying.

If Lininger and her allies do move forward with their legislation next session, it wouldn't be the first attempt to revise Oregon's Forest Practices Act. Lawmakers are likely to face opposition from members and supporters of the forest-products industry who claim cases like Cedar Valley are the rare exception and restrictions on herbicide could hurt timber production.

Timber companies spray herbicides anywhere between one to three years after a clear cut to ensure young replanted trees, often Douglas firs, are free of competition and can grow faster.

Scott Dahlman, Executive Director of Oregonians For Food and Shelter, which lobbies on behalf of the agriculture and timber industries, said after a recent community event in Rockaway Beach, Oregon, that he was disappointed in the public discourse over herbicide spraying.

"It left an impression out there that it's just lawless, reckless application of pesticides when it couldn't be further from the truth," Dahlman said. He added later, "these are some of the most highly regulated practices that exist."

Lininger said her team has reached out to foresters, landowners and applicators to help craft a rule that won't be excessively restrictive, and thus has a better chance of passing.

"At this conference we were at on Saturday, there was a lot of common ground between landowners, including ones who apply pesticides, and community members on the fact that nobody wants kids and families and drinking water to be harmed by pesticides intended for timberland," Lininger said.

— *Tony Schick*

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Lisa Arkin · 19 days ago

The comment made by Scott Dahlman - "these are some of the most highly regulated practices that exist"- couldn't be further from the truth! Please do your research Mr. Dahlman, Oregon has the weakest laws compared to Washington, Idaho and California. Quoted from a 10/23/2014 report in the Oregonian about forestry sprays: "The spraying happens under the Pacific Northwest's most industry-friendly regulations. Washington requires a wide no-spray zone around nearby homes. Oregon doesn't....The Oregonian reviewed regulations in four states and found Oregon stacks the deck in favor of the timber industry." Why would anyone in Oregon be proud to be the most backward state in the west when it comes to protecting drinking water and people from herbicides?

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UpperLeftCoast · 21 days ago

"It left an impression out there that it's just lawless, reckless application of pesticides when it couldn't be further from the truth,"

Reckless, but not lawless - and that's the problem.

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