

3-21-2019

Dear Representatives of the House Energy and Environment Committee,

I urge you to support SB 2656, the Oregon Safe Water Act of 2019.

Please keep the bill moving into a working committee where some of the objections from private small foresters might be mitigated, and the full benefit of the bill might be realized by the Oregon coastal communities *and* the forestry community.

It is tragic to think we are balancing the toxic effects of poisoning our water and air with “economic benefit”. Where is the economic benefit when one is struggling with cancer and chronic illness? Where is the economic benefit of managing our forests in ways that contribute to global warming, rather than helping to drawdown carbon, as healthy forest management can do?

We can have a potential win-win situation, but with smaller pieces of the economic pie. Healthier and more sustainable forest economies can coexist with healthier and more long-lasting lives.

The particular chemical compound that has recently been highlighted in the herbicide cocktails being sprayed to kill vegetation in clear-cut tree plantations, is glyphosate. It is also sprayed the vast majority of corn and soy crops as an herbicide, and more recently also sprayed on wheat, sugar, and other crops to better time the ripening for harvesting in industrial ways.

Glyphosate is absorbed into our food as well as contaminates water supplies. It is so pervasive it is found in most water supplies, all beer and wine, including organic (though at lower levels). It is additive in our bodies, and builds up because it is so pervasive we cannot detoxify it and excrete it as fast as our exposure has massively increased. Toxins have additive detrimental effects- which are rarely studied due to this complexity.

Additionally, though there have been arguments about just how toxic glyphosate is, sufficient awareness of its toxicity has led to carcinogenic warnings by the WHO. And, this chemical is not sprayed in isolation but with other ingredients known for a synergistic effect on its killing properties.

A recent study comparative effects of glyphosate alone and 14 of its formulations showed glyphosate was not even the major toxic compound in the herbicides formulations! Petroleum-based compounds in herbicides were more toxic than glyphosate, including known heavy metal toxins- arsenic, chromium, cobalt, lead, and nickel. However, not being classified as the “active ingredient,” these other components do not require any testing!

Current Oregon law and precedent, however, would not even enable such testing, as timber companies who use aerial and other spraying are not required to test nearby waters or soils for contamination.

Please take careful note of the testimony of the health of residents on the coast who are the living experiment on the effect of these chemicals on our bodies. It is long past time to finally honor the memory of Rachel Carson with legislation that significantly limits our exposure to toxic chemicals.

Sincerely, Harriet Cooke, MD, MPH
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Toxicity of Formulants and Heavy Metals in Glyphosate-Based Herbicides and Other Pesticides; Defarge, Spiroux de Vendomois, Seralini; *Toxicology Reports*, Vol. 5, 2018, Pages 156-163 <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S221475001730149X>