

The Register-Guard



OPINION HOME

GUEST VIEWPOINT

Senate bill offers protection from aerial sprays

BY LISA ARKIN

For The Register-Guard

MARCH 22, 2017

I imagine how you'd feel if you woke up one day and found your land contaminated with Atrazine and 2,4-D. Imagine further if your business depended on that land being organic. I think you'd be angry!

That happened last year to a stellar environmental steward, Mountain Rose Herbs. The Eugene company had to sell a 60-acre organic property because of spray drift that was likely from adjacent commercial timber operations.



Sadly, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Organic Program provides no compensation in the event that an organic producer is faced with a loss stemming from pesticide trespass. Yet because of advances in residue testing technologies, the organic industry is finding fresh evidence of pesticide residue contamination. Businesses have no recourse other than crop destruction, land forfeiture and revocation of organic certification.

Not only are organic farms faced with harm and property damage caused by drifting aerial herbicide sprays, communities west of the Cascades have found timber's wayward herbicides on their property, in their drinking water and even in their urine.

Remember the dozens of people sprayed in Gold Beach? Remember the residents of Rockaway Beach who discovered that the town's drinking water was contaminated after nearly all forested lands uphill were clear-cut and sprayed repeatedly with herbicides? Remember when 2,4-D was detected in the urine of children in rural western Lane County following a season of nearby aerial herbicide sprays? Finding carcinogenic herbicides in children is not normal. When chemicals are expelled through your urine, it means they have already traveled through various organ systems where damage can occur on the cellular level.

I attended a 2015 presentation by Dr. Fred Berman, director of the Oregon Institute of Occupational Health Sciences' Toxicology Information Center, when he reviewed the harmful effects of chronic, low-level insecticide and herbicide exposures for state officials. "Chronic, low level" exposures are the kinds experienced by residents when timber companies spray nearby timber clear cuts, sometimes as often as four years in succession. Berman pointed out the research on serious and possibly lethal sicknesses such as non-Hodgkin's lymphoma and other blood cancers, prostate cancer, breast cancer and kidney cancer.

No child should suffer these diseases. No parent should have to watch their child suffer through them, either.



Meanwhile, the timber industry tries to distract the public from the truth that aerial pesticide sprays can be very dangerous. One timber spokesperson, former Lane County Commissioner Anna Morrison, falsely opined in a recent guest viewpoint that Oregon's 60-foot pesticide buffers are the "nation's best." To the contrary, Oregon timber trespass laws are embarrassing when compared with those in other states. Arizona, Washington, California and Idaho require larger protective buffers than our home state because their laws are based on the best available science and the value of protecting health.

Other states regulate pesticide drift as an ultra-hazardous activity. In fact, in Arizona, where Morrison now lives, the laws require a 1,320-foot school buffer zone to protect children from pesticide drift, nearly 20 times larger than the buffers mandated by Oregon's laws.

In Oregon, timber laws were written by the industry itself, born in a political climate promoting secrecy and lack of accountability. Oregon lacks a clear policy to warn nearby landowners before aerial spraying begins near their homes, gardens and organic farms.

After refusing to adopt health-based buffer zones, the 2015 Legislature failed to pass a law requiring timely notification to residents, schools, medical facilities and organic farmers prior to aerial pesticide applications on nearby industrial timber land. When will Oregon step up to protect the public from pesticide drift?

Senate Bill 892, sponsored by Sen. Michael Dembrow, D-Portland, requires the timber industry to work with the Department of Forestry to provide advance notice and chemical information about timber aerial spray practices. Communities and organic farmers whose livelihoods depend on being pesticide-free have the right to know when and what is being sprayed.

Oregon's timber industries force rural communities to pay a high price for aerial sprays with illness and contaminated drinking water. Organic farmers risk significant losses when their

organic certification is compromised. When these two industries clash, we all lose by favoring the timber industry. In Lane County alone the timber industry employs just over 4,000 — compared to the organic and natural products industry, which employs more than 15,000 people.

Passing SB 892 will help uphold the standards of a growing Oregon organic farming industry whose certification relies on being pesticide-free. It is inherently unfair that locally based organic companies like Mountain Rose Herbs suffer losses due to the ultra-hazardous activity of the timber industry.

Lisa Arkin of Eugene is executive director of Beyond Toxics, which has worked on Oregon forestry herbicide issues for more than a decade.

More [GUEST VIEWPOINT](#) articles »

RG Opinion

Editorials, commentary & more delivered to your inbox.

Sign up

COMMENTS (1)

[LOG IN](#)

Post your comment...

SUBMIT

Sort by **Highest rated**

Hide replies



motleycrew

14 hours ago

The bill seems pretty straight forward.

Notification not earlier than 3 months or less than 7 days before of what, where and when would be required with a follow up as to what, where, when, and the weather and wind of the actual spray.

Unless this results in dozens of lawsuits to effectively deny any spraying on private forests at all, of course.

The eco-Nazis are capable of following that tactic, as has been shown for decades in the National forests, the Elliott Forest and so forth with law suit followed by law suit followed by law suit.

Flag

React

Reply

Today's Opinion stories

EDITORIAL

Resolve Elliott dilemma

6 

EDITORIAL

The impact of a lie

8 

GUEST VIEWPOINT

Berry: Ringin' the bell of rock 'n' roll history

1 

GUEST VIEWPOINT

Senate bill offers protection from aerial sprays

1 

JONAH GOLDBERG

Russia meddling probe has GOP on defensive

3 

EUGENE ROBINSON

Does the FBI's trail lead to Russia?

8 

GARRISON KEILLOR

The importance of hoeing



DANA MILBANK

Reading Trump's cue cards on Russia

1 

DAVID BROOKS

The unifying American Story

1

NICHOLAS KRISTOF

'That Food Saved My Life'

GAIL COLLINS

Trump stays buggy

1

E.J. DIONNE

'Trump' doesn't translate into Dutch

4

Sports

OREGON MEN'S BASKETBALL

Former Oregon basketball player Flo Hartenstein guides his son on path to NBA Draft

Ten years ago, a potential first-round NBA draft pick was learning to play basketball in Eugene. The 8-year-old had University of Oregon bloodlines, but before anyone could begin to wonder if he would follow his ...



1

- Tyler Dorsey puts together his best stretch of games for Oregon Ducks basketball in NCAA Tournament
- Former Oregon Duck Josh Line named Sheldon football coach
- Oregon Ducks wait for another chance to play road warriors in NCAA women's basketball tournament

[More SPORTS »](#)

Food

COOKING

Seaworthy skills: Taming the delicacies of the deep sea isn't as difficult as you may think

Take a breath: We're jumping with both feet into the deep waters of seafood cooking. For many, the preparation of fish and other treasures from the sea is akin to swimming in uncharted waters. But, ...



- Chickpea flour adds a boost of (nutritious) flavor to crepes
- A little Korea to go with your pork
- Food Notes

Tastings

FOOD

Free of gluten, filled with flavor

Dedicated gluten-free baker prides herself on creating delicious sweet and savory treats everyone can enjoy

Jessica Scarola, owner of the Elegant Elephant Baking Co. in Eugene, often jokes with her husband, Evan, and her parents about the amazing reality that she is a full-time baker, making gluten-free products that could ...



1

- 'Igloo' vineyards weather the storm
- Guardians of 'beer geekery'
- Next generation up for winemaking families

More **TASTINGS** »



Submit

Choose... ▼

Connect

Choose... ▼

Marketplace

Choose... ▼

Subscriber Services

Choose... ▼



THE REGISTER-GUARD

3500 CHAD DRIVE • EUGENE, OR • 97408

(541) 485-1234 FEEDBACK

COPYRIGHT © 1996–2017

TERMS PRIVACY COPYRIGHT