



An Open Letter to Members of the 78th Legislative Assembly,

We are writing as representatives of Oregon's natural resource sector, which has been an integral part of the health and welfare of our environment and rural communities for generations. No other industry sector in our state provides and protects more fish and wildlife habitat, stores more carbon dioxide, or delivers more opportunity to struggling rural families. We are deeply committed to the communities we live in, which is why we take our practices very seriously.

To protect these forests and communities, Oregon has some of the strictest environmental laws in the world, which has led to more scientific harvest practices. Foresters and loggers regularly employ the expertise of wildlife biologists, soil analysts, and water experts to ensure the protection of water quality and wildlife habitat when harvesting trees. Most importantly, foresters replant every parcel of harvested trees with new trees that will protect that land as forest for decades to come.

In recent months, there has been increased attention on how forestry companies use herbicides as a tool to control weeds and help young trees grow. We welcome this discussion because we are committed to upholding Oregon law, a science-based set of rules designed to protect water quality, fish and wildlife habitat, and local residents.

If the Oregon State Legislature conducts their review of these laws and regulations with science as their guiding principal, they should find Oregon's laws to be sufficient. Here is some basic information about herbicide use as background for you and to help you with any constituent questions you receive on this topic.

Foresters use the same herbicides you use on your lawn and garden, and application is regulated by thoughtful, science-based rules.

The herbicides we use are the same type sold to homeowners for use on residential property. These include products with the same active ingredients found in retail products like Crossbow®, Roundup® and Weed-B-Gon®. These products act on plants, and are of low toxicity to people and animals. And, unlike regular homeowner use, foresters typically apply herbicides two or three times in the decades-long lifecycle of a forest. The rules for herbicide use in forestry are grounded in science and administered by the Oregon Department of Forestry, Oregon Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. According to the Oregon Department of Agriculture, forestry accounts for just 4.2% of all pesticides used annually in the state.ⁱ



Herbicides help new trees grow after harvest and keep forests healthy.

The Oregon Forest Practices Act requires replanting of new trees within two years of harvest, and these new trees must be “free to grow” within six years. When planting after harvest, foresters sometimes use herbicides to control weeds, brush, and invasive species that compete with new trees for sunlight, nutrients, and water. After the first few years, herbicides are seldom – if ever – used again during the 40 to 60 year rotation of a managed forest.

Oregon studies indicate forest herbicides do not reduce water quality.

Testing in Oregon is not finding unsafe levels of herbicides on lands or streams surrounding applications. A 2012 Eugene Water and Electric Board studyⁱⁱ looked at eight years of pesticide monitoring in the McKenzie River Basin and concluded that forestry pesticides were rarely detected and, when present, were not at levels that would be harmful. Oregon DEQ also conducted two water-monitoring studies in the Siuslaw watershed and along the North Coast. Neither study found pesticide residue at levels that would be a risk to public health.ⁱⁱⁱ

Herbicide applications are heavily regulated and have a strong safety record, but parties need to be held accountable for violations.

Herbicide applications are conducted under heavy, science-based regulation and have a strong track record for safety. The law is very clear on the safety standards for application near adjacent landowners and near streams. Where there are violations of this law, the state has and should take action to hold people accountable.

We take the health and safety of our communities very seriously because we live and work there just as our neighbors do. We look forward to a discussion about herbicide use in Oregon’s forests, particularly if it is grounded in what science tells us about the effectiveness of current laws and regulations

For more information, contact any of these organizations or
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ⁱ Oregon Department of Agriculture, Pesticide Use Reporting System, 2008 Annual Report

ⁱⁱ USGS/Eugene Water and Electric Board, Reconnaissance of Land-Use Sources of Pesticides in Drinking Water, McKenzie River, Oregon, 2012

ⁱⁱⁱ Oregon Health Authority, Public Health Assessment, Highway 36 Corridor Exposure Investigation, October 2014; Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, Pesticide Monitoring in North Coast Watersheds, 2013