

Panelists argue safety of herbicides

By STEPHEN KNIGHT
Of the Emerald

Scientists urge ban of 'toxic' 2,4-D

Forest managers defended the use of phenoxy herbicides while scientists challenged their effect on human health Wednesday night before a capacity crowd at the Eugene City Council chambers.

In opening remarks at the forum sponsored by Greenpeace, representatives from the U.S. Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management and the Department of Agriculture defended the use of 2,4-D, a controversial herbicide used to control brush in Oregon forests.

Agriculture department chemist Logan Norris said chemicals such as 2,4-D are

scrutinized closely by the Environmental Protection Agency and would be banned immediately if clear evidence linking the chemical with health problems could be established.

While 2,4-D may be toxic, humans aren't exposed to harmful levels of the chemical, he said.

But biologist John Noel said just because the EPA hasn't found enough evidence doesn't necessarily mean 2,4-D is safe. The difference between 2,4-D and 2,4,5-T is only one chlorine atom, Noel explained.

"And 2,4,5-T is the most toxic substance mankind has ever synthesized, down to parts per trillion, and it's still toxic," he said.

The EPA banned use of 2,4,5-T last spring when its application in the Siuslaw National Forest was linked to a high incidence of miscarriages among women living in or near the forest.

Noel said residuals of TCDD, a substance found in 2,4-D, have been found in elk, deer and fish.

"(To say) herbicides affect plants and not animals is preposterous."

Toxicologist Phillip Levegue agreed with Noel. A substance that is toxic to one form of life is toxic to all forms of life, Levegue said.

Levegue, who taught toxicology to medical students for 22 years, read an account from

a medical magazine claiming railroad workers handling 2,4-D had a cancer rate 15 times higher than the national average.

Levegue also discussed the health problems from exposure to agent orange in Vietnam veterans. Agent orange is a defoliant that contains dioxin, a chemical compound also found in 2,4-D. Some of the symptoms of dioxin poisoning are dizziness, headaches, numbness and depression, Levegue said.

However, John Lowe, Assistant Forest Supervisor of

the Willamete National Forest, said the forest service minimizes health dangers by using herbicides cautiously and only after an extensive environmental impact statement has been filed.

The forest service also has decreased aerial spraying to keep the herbicides from drifting into watersheds, Lowe said.

BLM Eugene district manager Dwight Patton said of 317,000 acres of land in the Eugene district, only 4,500 acres have been sprayed since 1977.

Herbicides are the only tool available in controlling brush in some problem areas, Patton said.

Exhibits grace Collier House

Collier House, the University's faculty club, has become new host to continuing art exhibits by former University students and local artists.

The decor of Collier House, which is located across from the EMU and next to Johnson Hall, hasn't changed in years, says chef-manager Joan Mac Donald.

"Some people have been coming here to eat for 30 years, and it can get kind of dull," Mac Donald says.

That all changed three weeks ago when Mac Donald and former University art student James Lesan combined efforts to bring local art to the faculty club.

The first exhibit opens today with a reception from 7-9 p.m. Most of the exhibited art is for sale, and prices range from \$75 to \$850.

Lesan and three other Oregon artists — Patrick Curtis, Andy Johnston and Jean Laux — are featured in the first exhibit, which runs until April 15.

Collier House is open weekdays from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. for exhibit viewing, and lunch is served from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Lesan says anyone's art is eligible for exhibition in the faculty club, but he will give priority to University and local artists.

Interested artists can arrange for Lesan to review their art by calling him at 683-1918.

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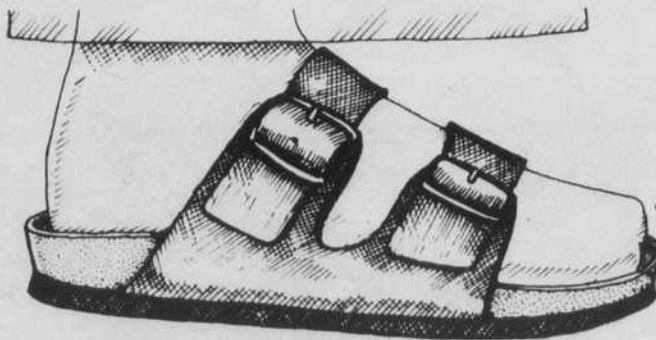
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