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TO

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TO

HEALTH NEWS

Pesticides found in Willamette

Five pesticides found in the river are under review by the EPA to determine health risks

By Kari Thorene
Higher Education Reporter

"In 1996 there were 8,699 pesticides registered for use in Oregon," OSPIRG Pesticide Project leader Michael Olson said. "Of those we have limited knowledge."

The Northwest Coalition for Alternatives to Pesticides recently released a report listing the existence of 36 pesticides in the Willamette River. The data was compiled from a 1996 U.S. Geological Survey.

It is difficult to offer a risk analysis at this time for how the pesticides will affect the Eugene community because the coalition report did not indicate concentration levels, said Environmental Protection Agency pesticide specialist Karl Arne.

However, many of the pesticides can impact human health.

The most persistent pesticide the USGS found in the Willamette River is Atrazine, one of the two most commonly used herbicides in the country, according to the EPA Office of Ground Water and Drinking Water. In Phase III of the USGS study (where water samples were tested in 1996), 99 percent of the samples showed traces of Atrazine.

Atrazine, as well as four other pesticides found in the Willamette River, are under special review by the EPA to reassess their impact on human health. The report on Atrazine is expected this summer.

Atrazine is mostly used for broadleaf weed control in the pro-

Potential effects

Potential health effects of Atrazine when exposure levels are above the EPA Maximum Contamination Level of 3 parts per billion*

■ **ACUTE:** congestion of heart, lungs and kidneys; hypotension; antidiuresis; muscle spasms; weight loss; adrenal degeneration

■ **CHRONIC:** weight loss, cardiovascular damage; retinal and some muscle degeneration; mammary tumors

■ **CANCER:** some evidence of cancer development after lifetime exposure

SOURCE: From the EPA Office of Ground Water and Drinking Water

*No levels have been determined for the Willamette River

duction of field corn and sorghum in the Midwest, according to the EPA Office of Pesticide Programs. Most of the EPA's data on the chemical's impact on human health come from the Mississippi River basin. However, Atrazine is also used for "turf and lawns, pineapples, sugar cane, wheat and macadamia nuts," according to the same EPA group.

While coconuts and pineapples may not be widely grown in the Willamette Valley, grass seed is. According to Turf Merchants, a local grass seed producer, "Over 65 percent of the world's supply of grass seed is grown in the Willamette Valley. ... More than 400 million pounds of grass seed is produced here annually."

It is unknown whether Turf Merchants uses these pesticides.

"Atrazine is fairly persistent and quite mobile, and because of this, it sticks around long enough

to be carried into ground water as well as into surface water via runoff," Arne said.

The potential health effects of Atrazine, depending on levels and duration of exposure, include heart, lung and kidney congestion, weight loss, cardiovascular damage and mammary tumors, according to the EPA Office of Ground Water and Drinking Water.

"Atrazine is a Class C carcinogen," Arne said. "The EPA classifies chemicals by how much evidence there is. Class A carcinogen means there is human evidence of cancer. Class B means there is pretty strong lab evidence — maybe a hint of human evidence. Class C is less compelling — maybe one out of two lab animals develops a cancer."

There are two other classes, Arne said. Class D means there is almost no evidence, and Class E means there is evidence that a substance is not a carcinogen.

The health impacts are calculated from estimated exposure through drinking water and food contamination, as well as occupational exposure; for example, through production of the chemical or application on a farm.

The EPA notes that its risk estimates are for treated drinking water, not untreated river water; however, conventional water treatment does not remove herbicides.

Atrazine was not the only pesticide found in the Willamette River that has potential carcinogenic effects, Arne said. Atrazine, Simazine, Metolachlor, Dacthal and Dichlobenil are all Class C carcinogens; Pronamide is a Class B carcinogen, he said.

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Race benefits sports mentoring programs

Alton Baker Park will be the site of the second annual "Truffle Shuffle" on Sunday, Feb. 22. The event is sponsored by Boulder Options, a sports mentoring program for at-risk and troubled youths, and events will begin at 12:45 p.m. Race events will include: a two-mile wheelchair race, a two-mile walk and run, a four-mile run, a kids fun run and an awards ceremony. Proceeds from the race will support Boulder Options' sports mentoring programs for both boys and girls. Registration forms will be available at local athletic clubs and stores. Registration will be \$16 today, but registration costs will be \$20 from Feb. 17-22. Participants can register the day of the race from 10:30 a.m. to 12 p.m. for the two-mile race; participants can also register for the four-mile race from 10:30 a.m. to 12:45 p.m. For more information, contact Susan Walsh at

341-1405.

Science is focus of Black history projects

Downtown Eugene, Inc. and WISTEC (Willamette Science and Tech Center) will celebrate Black History Month by recognizing important contributions African-Americans have made in the field of science on Saturday, Feb. 21. The community is invited to take part in interactive learning projects highlighting African-American scientific accomplishments from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the KROZ television station at One E. Broadway. Participants are also invited to view art projects showcased in the Broadway Plaza by Jefferson Middle School students. Prominent African-American scientists who will be featured in the event will include Lewis Howard Latimer, Dr. Lenora Moragne and Benjamin Banneker. For more information, contact Downtown Eugene,

Inc. at 343-1117 or WISTEC at 682-3619.

Reception and exhibit feature Black history

A public reception and self-guided tour of a 15-panel exhibit featuring banners, posters, photographs, artifacts and pieces of art covering different periods in African and African-American history is scheduled for Friday, Feb. 20 at the Lane County Courthouse at 125 E. 8th Ave. The free event is sponsored by Lane County and will begin at 11 a.m. in Harris Hall and the main entrance and lobby of the Public Service Building.

The exhibit will also cover biographical information from African-American leaders, including Martin Luther King, Frederick Douglass, Maya Angelou and Malcolm X. The exhibit will be on display through Friday, Feb. 27. For additional information about the exhibit or the reception and tour, call Hector Rios at 682-2367.

Oregon Daily Emerald

The Oregon Daily Emerald is published daily Monday through Friday during the school year and Tuesday and Thursday during the summer by the Oregon Daily Emerald Publishing Co. Inc., at the University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon. A member of the Associated Press, the Emerald operates independently of the University with offices in Suite 300 of the Erb Memorial Union. The Emerald is private property. The unlawful removal or use of papers is prosecutable by law.

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