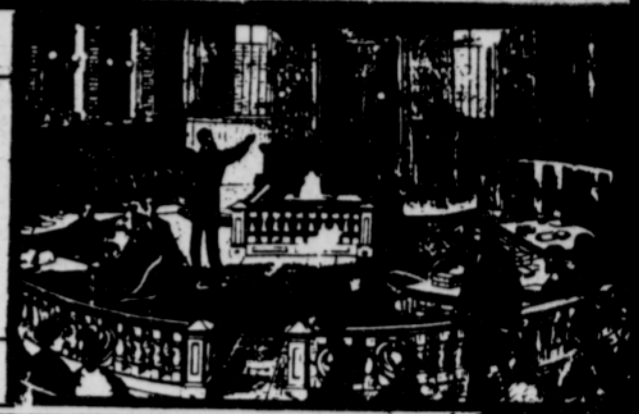




THE PUBLIC REPORT



OCEAN NEEDS YOU

The following article is the second of a two part series critical of the use of herbicides in forest management. It is written by the members of OCEAN.

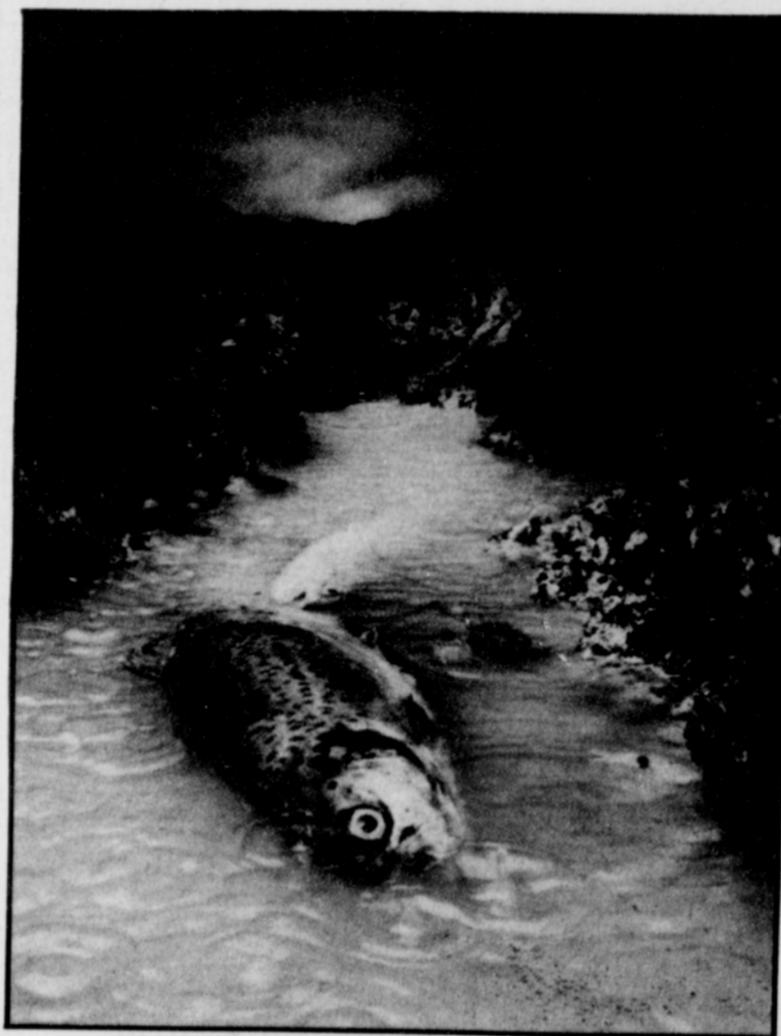
Not since the use of herbicides was first challenged has there been such an opportunity to initiate local regulations to protect community water systems from chemical contamination. This opportunity is not likely to come again. Consequently it is imperative that every citizen who is concerned about the use of herbicides and the quality of their water plan to set aside time during January and February to support the creation of a countywide Watershed Protection Overlay Zone in Clatsop County.

On November 15 the Falcon Cove Beach Domestic Water Supply District submitted a proposal to amend Clatsop County's Comprehensive Land Use Plan to include a new zone designed to protect the quality of municipal and special district water supply systems. The zone would regulate certain forest practices in and around designated watershed areas.

Briefly, no chemical applications would be permitted within one hundred and ninety-eight feet of each side of streams with perennial flow and sixty-six feet of streams with intermittent flow. All permitted chemical applications would be by backpack, and not sprayed aerially. Buffers of vegetation would be left around all streams. Clearcut operations and selective cutting would be regulated to prevent erosion.

Most significantly the zone would provide that requests to use herbicides or to clearcut timber in watershed areas would be subject to hearing and a public review. The county would have the authority to attach certain conditions upon activities in watershed areas based upon the public input. Today there is no such opportunity for public comment and forest practices frequently occur in watershed areas without the knowledge of, or notice to, those who use the water.

It is expected that the Falcon Cove proposal will be endorsed by the city of Cannon Beach and other special and water districts. However, mere endorsement will not be enough to make this law. Direct citizen involvement will be essential if this zone is to be adopted. Remember, the vice chairman of the Clatsop County Planning Commission, a former state forester presently employed by Boise Cascade, was once quoted as saying, "questions concerning the health and morality of using herbicides really aren't pertinent to our responsibilities as professional foresters." In other words, it is going to be an uphill battle.



The proposed zone will be submitted to six regional Citizen Action Committees (CAC) for public review. The CACs will each make a recommendation to the county planning commission. (The people to contact in the Cannon Beach area are Bill Boone and Dorothy Birkby, or call the city hall.)

Once all of the CACs have met a public hearing will be scheduled before the county planning commission. This should occur by the end of January or the first week in February. The planning commission will make a decision accepting, rejecting or modifying the zone. Its decision can be appealed.

Obviously massive and active citizen participation is critical at both the local CAC meetings and the later planning commission hearing. You can be sure that the forest industry will be out in force.

If you wish to help in the effort to adopt the protected zone proposal you should first of all know that you already know as much about the safety of herbicides and the danger of them entering a water system as any forest official. No one from the forest industry will speak from firsthand knowledge or research. All they know is what they read on the label or have been spoon fed by the industry.

The forest industry will declare that regulation is not necessary because the Oregon Forest Practices Act (FPA) is all the protection you need. The stated purpose of the FPA is laudable: "To regulate the handling, storage and application of chemicals in such a way that the public health and aquatic habitat will not be endangered by contamination of the waters of the state." However, the balance of the act and the practices of the industry fail to live up to this purpose.

You should know that the word "watershed" is never defined, regulated or even mentioned anywhere in the act. How can the industry maintain that the FPA protects our watersheds when the act fails even to recognize their existence? Yet it does.

You should also know that the FPA does not require the use of agents designed to limit the drift of herbicides into "non target areas" after aerial spraying. A Bureau of Land Management (BLM) study in 1977 of chemical applications where no drift agents were employed found that herbicides drifted as far as one hundred feet from the "target area." The study recommended a buffer zone of at least two hundred feet around all bodies of water (the FPA generally requires one swath in width, about fifty feet) and went on to conclude that, "The results have demonstrated that aerially applied herbicides do, indeed, enter the stream system, whether as a result of direct spray or overspray, drift, leaching or runoff during heavy rains."

You should also know that although the buffer zones around streams and waterways set out in the FPA are minimum standards, the industry interprets them to be maximum standards, regardless of the circumstances. When mud slid into Garibaldi last year off hillsides recently clearcut by the industry, the industry denied blame by saying it had followed the FPA and that was all it was required to do. The same excuses were made two years ago when the city of Wheeler complained of mud in its faucet water. The forest industry has perverted the purposes of the FPA by hiding behind its minimum requirements. If those minimum requirements are inadequate it is not "our fault" claim industry spokesmen because that is "all we are required to do." If there are any problems, they seem to say, it must be with the FPA.

You should know that the state forestry department, during spray operations earlier this year, inadvertently allowed chemicals to get into two streams classified as valuable for domestic use. This occurred despite the fact that minimum requirements of the FPA were followed. When confronted with this revelation the forestry department was quoted, "Finding 2, 4-D in the stream below the Tidewater unit surprised us because we have taken great care to avoid it."

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(503)777-6659
for any printing need

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Cannon Beach, Oregon