

OSPIRG TARGETS PESTICIDE USE

OSPIRG's Campaign for Safe Drinking Water aims to protect Oregon's groundwater

Thirty years ago, the publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* focused the nation's attention on the possible problems with pesticide use. Carson's descriptions of a springtime when no birds would be returning to nest or sing touched the hearts and minds of many Americans. Most importantly, Carson's book inspired scientists, policy makers and citizens to reexamine the need to continue using so many pesticides.

Since that time, numerous examples have emerged of public health and environmental problems due to continued use of pesticides.

Synthetic pesticides use has increased 33-fold since 1945, but crop losses due to pests have not been reduced. Nationwide more than 700 million pounds of pesticides are used per year. A poll by the American Farm Bureau, the nation's largest farm group, found that three-fourths of the public believes farmers use more agricultural chemicals than they should. Problems associated with excess pesticide use include:

Groundwater contamination. Drinking water resources, especially groundwater wells, are vulnerable to pesticide contamination from leaching waste. A recent Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) survey of community drinking water wells found pesticides in 10 percent of wells tested nationwide.

In 1985 the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) began a study in targeted areas where groundwater contamination from agricultural chemicals would be likely. DEQ research identified several problem areas:

- in northern Malheur County detections of nitrates from fertilizers and the pesticide dacthal were found;

- in Marion County detections of pesticides Bromocil, Dinoseb and EDB were identified.

Additional testing in 1990 found pesticides in Umatilla, Bend and Hillsboro.

Spills and accidents. Serious accidents during transport or storage of toxic chemicals can occur at any time. In July 1991, a railroad car on its way to Washington overturned into the Sacramento River in northern California, spilling 19,500 gallons of the pesticide metam sodium. The spill killed all fish in a 45-mile stretch of the river and scientists predict that the river will take up to 10 years to fully recover.

In March 1992, a fire at the Sheridan Grain Company in Sheridan, Oregon involved more than 100 chemicals including fungicides, herbicides and insecticides. A total of 36 homes in the immediate area were evacuated. The fire transported agricultural chemicals through smoke into the air and through runoff into the nearby Yamhill River.

Worker and consumer exposures. Workers and others are exposed to pesticides during use or in residues on food. A recent study found that workers on farms that regularly use pesticides had a greater number of medical symptoms than workers on organic farms. An EPA study estimates that each year farm workers suffer up to 300,000 acute illnesses and injuries from exposure to pesticides.

Consumers are also exposed to pesticides through food residues. Pesticides are left on produce and consumed when the produce is eaten. According to a 1990 PIRG report, 69 pesticides linked to cancer are legally allowed on food, and 32 of those pesticides are not detectable by the Food and Drug Administration's routine monitoring methods.

Environmental degradation. Drift of pesticides away from intended targets, and persistence and bioaccumulation of pesticides in the environment, can affect wildlife and contaminate other natural resources. It is estimated that 99 percent of pesticides never reach the targeted pests, but instead move into ecosystems, contaminating land, water and air.

In the summer of 1991, massive fish kills in Louisiana were being investigated for links to runoff into streams of the pesticide azinphos-methyl, used to attack the sugar cane borer. Use of the chemical was suspended, after more than 750,000 fish had died in southern Louisiana.

Since 1973 the pesticide DDT has been banned for most uses in the U.S. because DDT, and its breakdown product, DDE, caused eggshell thinning in birds near the top of the food chain, including declines in bald eagle and peregrine falcon populations. Today the current reproduction rate is still low. Eggshells continue to show elevated levels of DDE and other chemicals that contribute to eggshell thinning.

SOLUTIONS TO PESTICIDE PROBLEMS

OSPIRG's Safe Drinking Water Campaign promotes better information, faster cleanups, and pollution prevention as the most effective ways to protect Oregon's main drinking water source — groundwater.

PUBLIC INFORMATION

Improving available information about pesticides is the first step to reducing pesticide use. By monitoring the environment for pesticide contamination and establishing a pesticide use reporting system, we can get a clearer picture of current pesticide use and ways to reduce that use.

Monitoring is particularly important for groundwater impacts, since pesticides can contaminate current or future drinking water resources. Groundwater is very expensive and difficult to clean up. A good monitoring program enables engineers to observe contamination and helps determine where to put limited cleanup resources. Oregon's Groundwater Protection Act requires statewide groundwater monitoring, but no ambient monitoring program has been funded.

Pesticide use reporting is essential. Businesses in Oregon are required to report their industrial chemical use, so that there is public access to information about how much of which chemicals go into the environment. Agricultural chemical users should be equally accountable for the chemicals they put into the environment.

A number of states require pesticide users to report the type, amount and location of pesticides used. Washington, California and Texas are among the states requiring regular reporting by pesticide users.

FASTER CLEANUPS

Pesticide use can lead to serious environmental or public health impacts. Pesticide users need to be responsible for the full costs of that use, including cleanups of spills or non-point source problems.

Under the Oregon Groundwater Protection Act, money from the state's general fund, which is made up of money from all taxpayers, is used to cover the costs of groundwater protection from pesticide pollution. With demands on general funds increasing, more targeted funding should be identified for the groundwater protection programs. The users of toxic chemicals that contaminate groundwater should contribute to cleanup and protection of groundwater.

PREVENTING POLLUTION

The most effective and inexpensive way to address pesticide pollution is to take a preventive approach. Many techniques are available and are being employed to reduce the use of pesticides, from promoting lower chemical inputs into agriculture to bans on the use of certain synthetic chemicals.

Oregon should expand efforts to promote alternatives to pesticides and to restrict use of the most dangerous pesticides. Pesticide users should pay for such a program in the same way that industrial toxics users currently pay for Oregon's Toxics Use Reduction program.

Some agricultural techniques which reduce the adverse environmental impacts of current practices are:

Integrated Pest Management (IPM). IPM is an ecologically based approach to preventing and controlling weeds, disease, and insect pests. IPM's goal is not to eradicate insects and weeds, but to keep them below the level at which damaging economic costs occur. Under this integrated approach, farmers use chemicals selectively and only when necessary, rather than as the first and primary line of attack. In Oregon state agencies are required to use IPM techniques to control pests.

Organic Agriculture. Organic farming attempts to use no purchased synthetic chemical inputs. By taking advantage of naturally occurring beneficial relationships between pest and predator, and sustaining and enhancing natural systems rather than reducing and simplifying biological interactions, the harmful effects of pesticide use are eliminated.

In 1989 the Oregon Legislature supported organic farming by approving a law limiting the use of the label "organic" to a specific set of materials and practices used in growing. This law protects consumers and creates a defined market for organic farmers.

Pesticide Use Reduction. In certain circumstances, the most dangerous pesticides should be banned. Across the board, pesticide use should be reduced. In Sweden, the government established a goal of reducing the total use of agricultural pesticides by half in five years. Total pesticide sales have dropped dramatically, and further reductions are being implemented. ♦

OSPIRG is a statewide lobby working to protect consumers and the environment.

For more information on OSPIRG's Campaign for Safe Drinking Water, contact Pam Peck at 231-4181 in Portland.

NO ON NINE cont. from pg. 1

The extreme right wing group that calls itself the Oregon Citizens Alliance is hard at work, trying to force its idea of what Oregon should be on the rest of us. And it's not a pretty place.

Now, the OCA wants to take rights away from one group of Oregonians, and to require discrimination against them. They want to amend our constitution to make it all legal.

Using scare tactics, distortions and lies, they've whipped up enough support for this shameful idea to get it on the November ballot, as Ballot Measure 9.

With help from Pat Robertson's religious broadcasting network, national far-right organizations and an infusion of cash contributions from their friends in other states, they've made Oregon a target for imposing their narrow-minded views on everyone.

"As a community, as a state, as a nation, and especially as a planet, we have to learn to live with diversity."

Cottage Grove Sentinel
August 7, 1991

JOIN THE THOUSANDS OF RESPONSIBLE OREGONIANS FIGHTING FOR A HATE-FREE OREGON.

Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon
Oregon AFL-CIO • Oregon Library Assoc.
Norma Paulus • Oregon Medical Assn.
AFSMCE • Democratic Party of Oregon
Jewish Federation of Portland
NAACP • Oregon Psychological Assn.
Associated Oregon Industries
Oregon Public Employees Union
Lesbian Community Project
Oregon Fair Share • Neil Goldschmidt
Oregon Women's Political Caucus
Oregon NARAL • Oregon Education Assn.
People of Faith Against Bigotry
Right to Privacy PAC • Oregon NOW
Physicians for Social Responsibility
Urban League of Portland
YWCA of Portland • Powell's Books
National Assn. of Social Workers
(Oregon Chapter)

•Partial list•

All of Oregon's major newspapers have editorialized against Measure 9. Not one has supported it.



"The OCA initiative promotes a climate of bigotry, hatred and intimidation."

Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon
September 23, 1991

WHAT HAPPENS IF MEASURE 9 PASSES.

Our state constitution will be amended to legalize discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. Existing laws will be invalidated, including Oregon's Hate Crimes law, which has penalties for intimidation on the basis of sexual orientation. Portland's Civil Rights law will be reversed.

If Measure 9 passes, it will be the first time in U.S. history that a constitution has been amended to take away the rights of its citizens. Is that the kind of message we want Oregon to send?

- Schools at every level (K-12) would be forced to change their curricula to teach that homosexuality is "abnormal, unnatural and perverse." In short, the OCA will determine for you what to tell your kids about homosexuality. Even in our universities, free speech on the subject will be banned. Homosexual teachers, librarians and all public servants who work with kids would be "reassigned" or fired.

- Union contracts with non-discrimination clauses on sexual orientation would be invalidated; federal contracts for AIDS services would be jeopardized. Some Oregonians will lose their jobs and others may lose their lives because of the OCA's radical agenda.

- Because Measure 9 is an attack on freedom of speech and other rights guaranteed under the U.S. Constitution, it would provoke costly legal challenges that would drain Oregon's tax dollars at a time we should be uniting our resources to battle the real problems facing all of us.

"If the OCA's measure is approved, we can be sure they will take their mind control movement to every public library in Oregon."

East Oregonian (Pendleton)
May 28, 1992

WHY WORRY ABOUT A FRINGE GROUP?

Maybe you think we don't have much to fear from a group with such a narrow agenda. The OCA is small, but make no mistake, it means business. The people behind it are organized and passionate.

Scare tactics and politics of division have raised a lot of money from impressionable people and far right organizations around the country.

The OCA has already had successes, including passage of an anti-gay measure in Springfield. They motivated 139,000 Oregonians to sign the initiative that put Measure 9 on the ballot.

They, and their clones on the reactionary right, see Oregon as a test case. If their agenda and tactics work here, they'll export it to other states, other issues.

Today their target is the gay and lesbian community. But their goal is to force their narrow, divisive concept of "family values" on all Oregonians. Whether that be a matter of sexual orientation, a woman's right to choose, or personal privacy, we all have to ask: Who is next on the OCA's target list?

This much is clear: the OCA is trying to set itself up as the guardian of what we Oregonians may read, see, do and believe.

They may very well succeed, unless each of us joins the fight against them. Every Oregonian has a stake in the outcome of this election.

"(This measure) preys on the base fears of citizens of this state and is a fundamental attack on the free exchange of medical and scientific information."

Oregon Medical Assn.
September 19, 1991

Who says I'm not under the special protection of God? Adolf Hitler

I don't know why the religious never ascribe common sense to God.
Somerset Maugham

Nothing is more unpleasant than a virtuous person with a mean mind.
Walter Bagehot (1826-1877)



The only abnormality is the incapacity to love. Anais Nin

Elizabeth FURSE FOR CONGRESS

BRIDGESTONE BICYCLES KLEIN SPECIALIZED



MIKE'S BIKE SHOP Since 1974 P.O. BOX 518
(503) 436-1266 Cannon Beach, OR 97110