

Stop the Poisoning

Toxic spraying is out of control

In western Oregon, helicopters are spraying tree farms, and families are poisoned from the drift. This poisoning is legal, with insignificant liability. Most of our state's farmers and foresters can't operate without large quantities of fuel, pesticides and fertilizers, all derived from imported oil and natural gas. Our food and fiber production has become chemical-dependent, and the poisons don't stay put. Residues end up in our land, water, wildlife and even our own bodies.

Pesticide poisons, pollutants, diesel smoke and strong fragrances are acutely toxic to a large fraction of our citizens. Chemical sensitivity is induced in genetically susceptible children when they are exposed to poisons and toxics. Further exposures cause violent, life-threatening reactions. Chemically damaged people must be protected from exposure, but the pesticide industries have a powerful influence in Salem. Their lobby, Oregonians for Food and Shelter, is the biggest-spending, advocating for pesticides, fertilizers and genetically modified products. OFS helped write the laws and policies that allow landowners and applicators to avoid liability and meaningful regulation. Until recent elections brought Democratic majorities to the Legislature, OFS had dominant influence on committee budget decisions to fund DEQ pesticide residue testing and monitoring and a controlling grip on the budget and priorities for the Department of Fish and Wildlife. Today, OFS is represented by two lobbyists, wielding veto power, on the Avakian/Bonamici Senate Work Group on children's health and pesticides.

On the federal level, the BLM is gearing up to expand herbicide use to 17 Western states, to control or eradicate invasives. These BLM programs are as dysfunctional as the WOPR choices. Forest and range fertility stem from indigenous fungal/microbial food webs living in the soil. In intact forests, 60 percent of biological activity occurs underground. In Western Oregon, BLM checkerboard lands are the last refuges for local soils. On adjoining checkerboards, owned by corporate interests, the heavily herbicided soil foodwebs are gone, flushed into poisoned river and estuary sediments. East of the Cascades, the soils of both BLM and privately owned lands are devastated by 150 years of over-grazing, farming, logging and mining, and now, off road vehicles. Pesticides won't solve the problems created by land abuse, and spraying opens ground for more invasives.

In Lane County, our commissioners, acting as the Board of Health, will address in April whether to use herbicides along county roadside. They will also decide the level of spending to control invasive weeds. The board knows that any herbicide application may result in a lawsuit. The Public Works Department is on probation for earlier herbicide liabilities but is actively promoting four types of herbicide use and has refused to say how much they'll use for any of the proposals. The department has stated that any attempts to limit the amounts they sprayed would cause them to use as much as possible. They could not produce last year's vegetation management expense breakdowns.

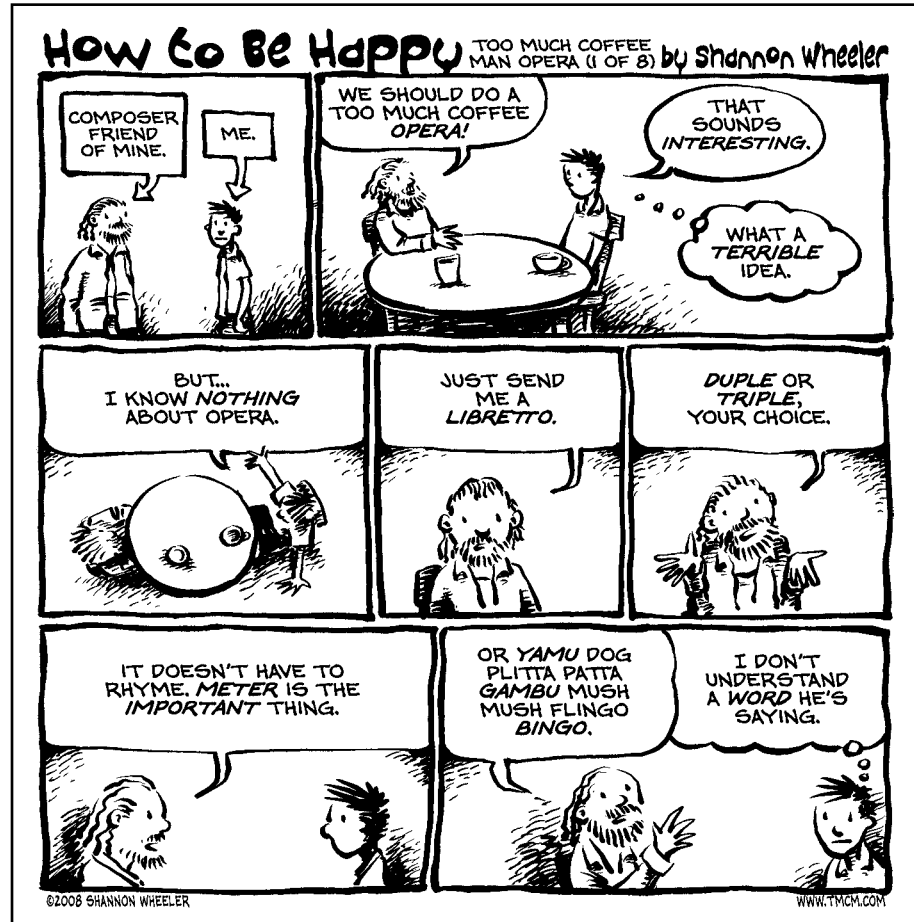
To rehabilitate itself, Public Works must create record-keeping systems that makes sense to outside auditors, not just current employees. Every herbicide proposal must specifically prioritize human and environmental health and must be signed off by county counsel and Risk Management in full compliance with policy and law.

I have been visiting watershed councils, presenting my points of resource protection. Faced with fossil fuel prices that could double and triple at any time, we must make plans to feed, clothe and shelter ourselves without fossils. At the Mohawk Watershed Partnership, I presented maps showing spraying within a mile radius of local schools since 1990. At the McKenzie Watershed Council, I handed around the Mohawk maps, noting that Chemical-Dependent Short Rotation (CDSR) tree farm practices destroy and erode irreplaceable forest soils.

The Siuslaw Watershed Council conducted informational meetings on pesticide use and forest practices last summer. At February's meeting we heard a presentation on the devastated West Coast salmon runs, and I handed around pictures of the logging practices around Triangle Lake School.

Protecting local soils means using applied biology. If soils aren't too badly eroded, most toxins and pesticide residues can be cleaned up by covering with wood chips inoculated with fungal/microbial cultures. No technology exists yet to clean up dioxin-laden river sediments. The biggest problem is convincing fellow citizens and their leaders that planning for a future without oil is our most important priority. Gov. Kulongoski appears ready for a legacy of health protection and toxics reduction, but he needs support. The many paths to a sustainable future for our grandchildren all start with two critical steps – save the soils and stop the poisoning.

John Sundquist farms north of Coburg, and has served on the county Vegetation Management Advisory Committee since 1996. He serves on the Oregon Senate Work Group on pesticides and children's health, and on the boards of Oregon Toxics Alliance and Forestland Dwellers.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

PIERCY THINKS RIGHT

The national political primaries actually bring into focus just how fortunate we are to have Kitty Piercy serving as our mayor. The candidates' national debates and their positions (and promises) make one ponder what is actually real, what is likely and how quality of life hasn't been enhanced.

Enough of the simplistic arguments nationally and locally offered as explanations. The promises to magically turn lead into gold, as in repairing neglected streets, making downtown Eugene a mega-business center and ridding the city of its "overwhelming" crime, are among the hot-button issues said to be accomplished signally by the "right-thinking" mayor.

A common theme runs through Kitty Piercy's history of public service and leadership: a dedication to improving the quality of people's lives. With her leadership in and efforts on behalf of numerous city or state organizations, she has focused on what will ultimately benefit individuals in their communities. Arguments over the political balance sheet lose sight of the reality of her dedication to the quality of our lives. A mayor who goes out of her way to connect with people in their venue — how novel is that?

The spin and hoopla of false promises, or the use of labels devoid of significant meaning, won't obscure Piercy's contribution to the vitality of our community. Her commitment to enhancing the quality of our lives defines a "right thinking" mayor.

If you haven't yet, get to know Kitty Piercy.

*Robert L. Weiss
Eugene*

BIG IMPROVEMENT

I, too, state that Rob Handy would make an excellent Lane County Commissioner as I live in the River Road area and know him and his work with the community. He is a

very ethical, honest person and would be a huge improvement to the politicians that we have now. Ask others who belong to the River Road/Santa Clara community, and they will tell you.

*Dorothy Bucher
Eugene*

PROZAC KILLS

What if nearly all the major shootings in recent history had something in common other than what John Zerzan ("Terror of Daily Life," 3/6) weakly deduces as "the smell of gunsmoke?" What if they were all having psychotic reactions consistent with the side effects of SSRIs (known dangerous hallucinogens) right on the label? Let's start, like John, with 1966 and the original "hypnotic courier," Charles Whitman. What Zerzan failed to mention was that Charles was tanked up on Dexedrine and Valium and having quite the psychotic reaction. Surely there is more to blame here than society, John.

The FDA just finished a study with 4,400 kids where those taking antidepressants were found to double their risk of suicidal thinking or behavior compared to the placebo group in just two months of trials. The side effects of Prozac are now listed as: apathy, euphoria, hallucinations, hostility, neurosis, paranoid reactions, personality disorder, psychosis, anti-social reaction, delusions, confusion, suicidal ideation, violent behaviors, homicidal ideation and Prozac-induced akathisia, mania.

But the drug makers continue to downplay the cause and seal the medical records immediately and with gusto. SSRIs are now prescribed to 2-5 year olds (terrible twos?) and shy people (Social Anxiety Disorder). Perhaps this is really the domain of alternative medicine and a vegan raw foods diet. To my knowledge, no vegans or people taking albizzia, passionflower, ginkgo, wild oats, hawthorn, hypericum, scutellaria or even placebo sugar pills have