

BEYOND

The Threat of Toxics

A Road to Paradise Soaked with Poisons

"He said the stuff he was using was safe enough to drink," Denare Axell recalled. "I should have asked him right then and there to prove it."

Denare, a nurse, had found her piece of paradise in the high desert near La Pine, Oregon.

Tall Ponderosa pines guarded her small two-bedroom home. She planted plum, pear and apple trees, and a vegetable garden about the property to help feed her family. A row of roses went in along the front fence. She purchased native plants for an ornamental garden. Small rhododendrons and azaleas adorned her 2-acre lot. This was her home, the place where she and her family enjoyed raising their chickens and St. Bernard dogs.

In the summer of 2010, Denare was working in her yard when she heard the truck moving slowly down the road along her fence line. She walked to the end of her driveway and saw a Klamath County truck spraying a liquid along her property line. When she asked what it was, Denare was told that the county was spraying chemicals for weeds.

Within weeks, Denare's roses began to shrivel. The fur on her 150 pound St. Bernard came off in great fistfuls and within a month the dog stopped eating and died. Then the chickens started dying. A year later, not a single fruit tree remains. The grass didn't only die, there's no longer a trace that it ever existed. Only one lonely, brown, stunted rhododendron is stubbornly holding on in what now looks like a barren wasteland.

by Lisa Arkin, Executive Director of Beyond Toxics



*Central Oregon to the Three Sisters wilderness:
malignant mileage.*