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April 1, 2013

Senator Jackie Dingfelder  
Chair, Senate Committee on Environment and  
Natural Resources  
c/o Ms. Beth Patrino  
Oregon State Legislature  
900 Court Street NE, Room 347  
Salem, Oregon 97301

Re: SB 800

Dear Chair Dingfelder and Committee Members:

My name is Bobbi Lindberg and I am a former water quality specialist for the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality. Since my retirement at the end of September, 2011, I have been a member of the Board of Directors of Beyond Toxics, a Eugene-based private non-profit corporation, and have done volunteer work for the organization.

The evidence is mounting: hardly a month passes without another study being published raising concern about the negative impacts of pesticide use. A recent study conducted by a German university found very high concentrations of glyphosate, the pesticide in Roundup, in all urine samples tested. The amount of glyphosate found in the urine was 5 to 20 times the limit established for drinking water. Another study in France linked levels of glyphosate thought to be safe to tumors, liver and kidney failure, and premature death in laboratory animals. In response, the French government has started an investigation.

In Oregon, pesticide applicators are required to keep records, but those records are not available to the public unless they are requested by the Oregon Department of Agriculture or, in the case of pesticide use on forest lands, requested by the Oregon Department of Forestry.

These agencies do not routinely request pesticide application records. The only time these agencies have requested significant numbers of records is in connection with the Oregon Health Authority's current investigation of pesticide exposure in the Triangle Lake area. As part of that investigation, the Department of Forestry received 244 documents containing pesticide application records, which were then released in response to public records requests by individuals concerned about their exposure to pesticides. Those individuals provided copies of the records to Beyond Toxics.

I have reviewed all 244 of these documents, and as I did so, I made a list of those which lacked some of the information required by ODF rules. That list contains 65 records, or about 27% of the total. So more than one out of four records do not comply with the law. I believe that requiring pesticide application records to be filed with the government and available to the public will improve the record-keeping practices of these pesticide applicators.

I support the amendments to this bill which will require all commercial applicators of pesticides and all applicators of pesticides on agriculture and forest land to file with Oregon state agencies copies of the records they are already required to keep.

In my view, this bill does not go far enough. It provides records after pesticides have been used. It does not provide advance notice so that individuals can take action to ensure their own safety from chemical trespass. A number of states have laws that allow individuals who are chemically sensitive to receive 24-hour advance notice of pesticide applications that may affect them. I believe Oregon should follow the lead of those states and establish requirements for advance notice of pesticide use.

Unfortunately, the history of pesticides follows a pattern: new products are introduced which are thought to be safe, only to be pulled from the market years later when their real dangers are finally recognized.

How can we act on a problem when we don't even know the extent of that problem? Requiring government and public access to pesticide application records will at least provide information. For example, how many of you are aware that in just three years' time, over 20 tons of pesticide products were applied to the Triangle Lake study area, which represents just a fraction of the forest land in Oregon?

Many believe that access to clean water will be this century's most vexing problem. Yet many of our groundwater reserves are already being contaminated by pesticides. We will never be able to address these problems unless we have access to information about when, where, and how much of these poisons are being applied in our state.

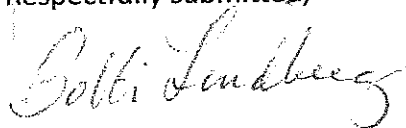
As stated by the U.S. Geological Survey, at <http://ga.water.usgs.gov/edu/pesticidesgw.html>:

Pesticides are mostly modern chemicals. There are many hundreds of these compounds, and extensive tests and studies of their effect on humans have not been completed. That leads us to ask just how concerned we should be about their presence in our drinking water. Certainly it would be wise to treat pesticides as potentially dangerous and, thus, to handle them with care. We can say they pose a potential danger if they are consumed in large quantities, but, as any experienced scientist knows, you cannot draw factual conclusions unless scientific tests have been done. Some pesticides have had a designated Maximum Contaminant Limit (MCL) in drinking water set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), but many have not. Also, the effect of combining more than one pesticide in drinking water might be different than the effects of each individual pesticide alone. It is another situation where we don't have sufficient scientific data to draw reliable conclusions.

The U.S.G.S. also notes that "The effects of past and present land-use practices may take decades to become apparent in groundwater." Must we wait until our groundwater resources are irretrievably contaminated before we even begin to try to understand the cumulative effects of our current practices?

I urge you to act favorably on SB 800 so that the citizens and scientists in Oregon can begin to understand the extent of pesticide use in our state. It's far from a solution to the problems caused by pesticides, but at least it's a beginning.

Respectfully submitted,



Roberta (Bobbi) Lindberg

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