



In profiling the use of herbicides in Oregon's forestry sector, two recent stories in *The Oregonian* ([Story 1](#), [Story 2](#)) took great pains to sensationalize the practice by using extreme cases of negligence in application. The safe and lawful use of herbicides in forestry – detailed below – is as vital to protecting young plants as it is for any farmer. We take safety and the law seriously and *fully support* state action against anyone who violates the law.

According to the Oregon Department of Agriculture, forest landowners are responsible for 4.2 percent of all pesticides used every year in Oregon. Among all pesticides used in Oregon for any purpose, the forest sector generally uses only herbicides. These herbicides are some of the same type sold to homeowners for use in residential property.

Why are herbicides used in forestry?

The Oregon Forest Practices Act requires re-planting of new trees within 2 years of harvest and these new trees must be “free to grow” within 6 years. When planting after harvest, forest landowners sometimes use herbicides to control weeds, brush and invasive species that compete with new trees for sunlight, nutrients, and water.

Without herbicides, these new trees may not survive and, by law, landowners must replant trees until they grow successfully. Once new trees are strong enough to survive on their own, herbicides are seldom used again. While homeowners often use herbicides on lawns yearly, forest landowners may only use them for 2 years in an area and then not for another 40-80 years.

A serious and growing problem for successful reforestation and productive forests is native and non-native invasive plant species on forestlands, thus herbicide use is an important management option.

Where are herbicides used?

It varies depending on local conditions. In the Coast Range they may be used up to three or four times over that short span when new trees need help to survive. In the Cascade Range they may not be used at all, or perhaps once or twice. Slower-growing forest stands in eastern Oregon don't receive herbicide treatment as often

as forests on the west side. Herbicide applications are expensive; therefore, landowners limit their use to meet management objectives.

What laws govern herbicide applications in forestry?

The Federal Insecticide Fungicide and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA) governs the use of all herbicides according to federally-approved labels. The herbicide labels carry the full force of federal law. FIFRA is administered and strictly enforced by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Oregon Department of Agriculture

In addition, all herbicide use must comply with Oregon's Pesticide Control Act, and applications in forests must be conducted in accordance with the Oregon Forest Practices Act and the Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) chemical rules. Oregon law states clearly that a person is prohibited from applying pesticides in a "faulty, careless, or negligent manner" or in a manner "inconsistent with its labeling."

Labels for the most commonly used herbicides prohibit application directly to water or to areas where surface water is present. They also prohibit application in a way that will contact workers or other persons, either directly or through drift. ODF's chemical rules require "no-spray" buffers around most streams, rivers, lakes, ponds, and wetlands.

Oregon law gives these restrictions teeth by applying both civil and criminal penalties to any violation. Taken as a whole, these laws ensure the safety of neighboring landowners and Oregon's waters.