



Forest Facts

HERBICIDE USE ON FORESTLAND

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Oregon's public policy for private forestland is to support the economically efficient growing and harvesting of trees, while protecting natural resources. State rules recognize that when used properly, herbicides (which control unwanted plants) and other pesticides are valuable tools in managing forests.

Oregon's Forest Practices Act requires prompt reforestation after harvesting. To meet this objective, many forest landowners in Oregon choose to use herbicides to control unwanted vegetation that competes with tree seedlings for survival. Landowners have found their use effective in helping them reforest after logging or fires, controlling noxious weeds or for converting brushy, underproductive lands to forests. Herbicide use is also often the most cost-effective method of vegetation control on forestland. Other means available to control unwanted vegetation include cutting brush by hand or with power tools, clearing vegetation with heavy equipment, manually removing grass sod from around individual trees, mowing, and placing mulch or mulch mats around individual trees.

Herbicide use on forestland is infrequent

Usually, herbicides only need to be applied one to three times during the first five years or so after seedlings are planted when the seedlings are most vulnerable. Further applications aren't typically needed until the trees are harvested 30 to 50 years later.

Chemical applicators must comply with the forest practice rules

The Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) works with landowners, loggers and pesticide applicators to ensure compliance with the forest practice rules. Most of the time, the rules are voluntarily followed and there are few instances of rule violations. If violations do occur, the department issues citations, fines and orders to repair natural resource damage.

The rules require that applicators protect soil, air, fish, wildlife and water quality by doing the following:

- Avoiding aerial herbicide applications within 60 feet of fish use streams or domestic use streams, and avoiding ground-based applications (backpack or pressurized sprayers) within 10 feet of those streams.
- Protecting trees and plants required to be left along streams

Applicators must avoid leaks or spills of pesticides and may mix and handle pesticides only where accidental leaks or spills will not reach streams or other waters. If a spill accident does happen on forestland, those responsible are required to report the incident and take action to stop, contain and clean up the spill. This is required by the rules administered by ODF and the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality.

Other ways people and natural resources are protected

Applicators must comply with all requirements on pesticide product labels. Before selling a pesticide, the pesticide manufacturer must register the product with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. To register a pesticide, a manufacturer must test it for effects on humans (through animal exposure tests) and the environment. Labels on the product must describe allowed uses, appropriate protection measures and the kind of applicator that should be used. Applicators must also comply with Oregon's Pesticide Control Law (administered by the Oregon Department of Agriculture), which prohibits activities such as allowing drift that causes damage to another person's health or property. Finally, applicators must properly dispose of empty pesticide containers to avoid environmental contamination.

Measures protect water quality

Some of the highest quality water in the state comes from Oregon's forestlands. Forestry laws and rules have demonstrated success in reducing the effects of herbicides on streams (*2000 State of the Environment Report*, Science Panel, Oregon State University for the Oregon Progress Board).

In 1994, the state revised and improved existing streamside protection rules for non-federal land in Oregon. The rules specify that anyone conducting operations near streams, lakes or wetlands must maintain live trees, vegetation and large wood along streams, maintain adequate fish passage along the length of a stream and protect lakes and wetlands. The protection requirements apply for all activities, including harvesting, road building, treating slash and applying pesticides.

Citizens can find out about chemical applications planned in their area

To find out what forest chemical applications (or other forest operations) are planned in your area, you can sign up for ODF's subscription service (there is a fee for this service). To sign up, call or visit your nearest ODF office or ODF's Salem headquarters (503-945-7200). You can also find the subscription form and more information at www.oregon.gov/ODF. Click on "Private Forests," "Forest Practices," then "FACTS Data").

Besides ODF, other sources for information include:

- Oregon Department of Agriculture (Oregon's lead agency for pesticide use), www.oregon.gov/ODA/PEST/
- U.S. Department of Environmental Quality, www.epa.gov/pesticides/
- The Pesticide Analytical and Response Center, www.oregon.gov/ODA/PEST/pare.shtml
- Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, www.oregon.gov/DEQ/