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# Herbicide spraying worries ranchers



AUGUST 31, 2011

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A small group of concerned citizens is calling on the provincial government to end the widespread spraying of herbicide on public forests in the Central Interior.

Consisting primarily of ranchers in the Punchaw area southwest of Prince George, the group, Stop the Spray BC, says forest companies and government agencies including BC Timber Sales currently oversee the spraying of between 10,000 and 15,000 hectares of forest with a glyphosate-based herbicide across the Central Interior every year.

They say the chemical kills most broad-leaved plants it touches - blueberry, raspberry, strawberry, and food crops for moose and deer like aspen and willow - leaving only conifers including pine, spruce, and fir.

"The purpose of this is to eliminate the aspen, birch and shrubs that some foresters believe competes with commercial tree crops," said Stop the Spray BC spokesperson James Steidle in a press release.

"However, a growing number of top forest scientists, including government researchers in the Prince George area, have conducted studies that show aspen and birch don't always impact conifer growth, and can in fact be beneficial."

Recent studies by University of British Columbia forest science professor Dr. Suzanne Simard have shown that aspen and birch can improve forest health, reducing disease rates and the severity of insect damage.

Aspen and birch have also been shown to fire-proof forests, providing buffers against the spread and intensity of wildfires, Steidle said.

Steidle added glyphosate-based herbicide has been shown elsewhere to be highly toxic to frogs and invertebrates. B.C. Ministry of Environment spokesman Suntanu Dalal said this finding has become a concern to the ministry and that Health Canada's Pesticide Management Regulatory Agency is re-evaluating glyphosate herbicides.

"In the meantime, we are taking precautionary measures," Dalal said.

Primarily, the ministry is urging pesticide application professionals to refrain from spraying over small water bodies where amphibians are found.



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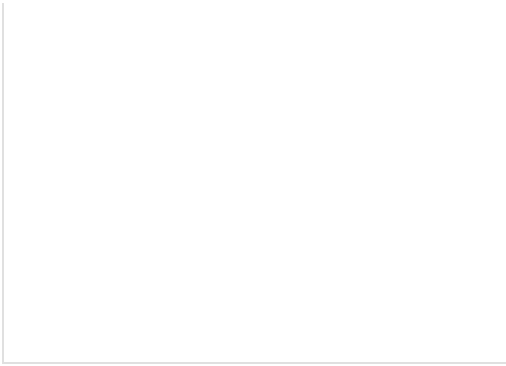
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