



# Oregon Updater



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## Working with the Legislature

### OTA Puts Focus on Pesticides and Children's Health

By Lisa Arkin, Executive Director

Did you know that in Oregon pesticide users are required to establish protective buffer zones to prevent pesticides from drifting on grapes, wheat, and salmon-bearing streams, but there is no policy or law that protects our children from pesticide drift? In fact, since 1999, there have been over 60 recorded incidences of pesticide poisonings in Oregon schools!

Oregon Toxics Alliance envisions a future in which children's health is a



priority for making decisions in Oregon, and we're working hard to make that vision a reality.

In 2007, we introduced a bill in the Oregon Senate to establish pesticide-free buffer zones around schools. The bill stalled in committee, but in its wake the Oregon Legislative Workgroup on Pesticides and Schools was formed. This Workgroup has been meeting at the State Capitol for five months and will continue to meet throughout 2008.

Sitting alongside OTA's executive director and two board members on the Workgroup are legislators, representatives from each state agency, members of the Oregon Educators Association and School Board Association, as well as powerful lobbyists from big-Ag and big-Timber.

To date, the Workgroup has agreed to legislation that will require that all Ore-

gon public schools (pre-K-college) adopt an Integrated Pest Management Policy by 2012. IPM is a method that uses prevention and non-chemical alternatives before pesticides are ever considered. This significantly reduces the need for chemicals. The Workgroup also agreed that schools must notify parents, faculty, and staff prior to pesticide application and post notices of pesticide use before and after application on school grounds.

As we move towards the 2009 Legislative session, OTA will make sure these bills get passed and signed into law. We are strong advocates at the legislature, educating our lawmakers about adopting values that put precaution and children's health first! Soon, the use of pesticides in schools will be a thing of the past.



## Toxic Soup

### Swimming Upstream, but Making Progress With Chemical Reform

By Dona Hippert, Board President

We have good news and bad news... Bad news first – every day it seems that we get word of a new study that tells of toxic chemicals in our everyday items and of devastating health consequences that can result from these exposures. It seems as if we're just swimming in a toxic soup. Now the good news – there is a growing groundswell of awareness

and concern here in Oregon. That concern extends even to the Governor's office, where toxics will be one of four natural resources priorities in the next legislative session. Toxics is also slated to be one of DEQ's top four legislative priorities. A large part of the reason for this is the work of OTA and our participation in the Oregon Chemicals Policy

Work Group (OCPWG).

In early 2007, the Bullitt Foundation awarded a grant to the four partner groups that make up OCPWG. Along with OTA, they are Oregon Center for

Please turn to **Toxic Soup**



## Our New Prez

### OTA Elects a New Board President

Question: What do you get when you combine a Law Degree with a B.A. in Botany and a passion for reducing toxics in the environment? Answer: OTA's new Board President, Dona Hipert.



Dona's work in toxics reduction began back in 1979 after graduating from University of Texas with a B.A. in Botany. Working as an Ornamental Horticulturist for the Austin Parks and Rec Department and the Texas Governor's Mansion gave Dona a great opportunity to make a difference. "I thought the head of the Purchasing Department was going to fall off his chair when I called in to order a gallon of ladybugs," she says. After the ladybugs successfully ended an outbreak of aphids, they became a point of pride in the Mansion and were often highlighted by tour guides.

Dona's interest in law began after moving to Oregon when she received

her first call for jury duty and immediately fell in love with the legal system. "Never a morning person," she says, "I found myself jumping out of bed to participate on a jury."

After receiving her law degree and passing the Oregon bar in 2003, Dona did the "whole college bum thing 20 years late," spending two months traveling Europe by train. Upon her return, she set-up a solo practice as a public interest attorney specializing in air and toxics issues, and in 2006 she joined the Oregon Toxics Alliance Board. OTA feels lucky to have someone as gifted and passionate about protecting our environment as Dona as our new President. Thanks Dona!



## Citizens' Hearings

### Telling the Story of Pesticides Exposure

By Thomas Kerns, Board Member

OTA is exploring the possibility of holding statewide "Citizens' Hearings" into the harmful effects that exposure to pesticide sprays and residues can cause. The purpose of the hearings would be to hear, document and publicize the personal impacts that pesticide exposures have had on individuals and families around the state in much the same way Truth and Reconciliation commissions have sought to hear and authenticate experiences of those whose governments have harmed or failed to adequately protect them.

The idea for Oregon's Citizens' Hearings was inspired by the People's Inquiry into Aerial Pesticide Spraying held in New Zealand in early 2006. During that Inquiry commissioners sat for five days taking oral and written testimony from community members describing their

experience of the spray and its impacts, as well as from medical experts, physicians, entomologists and public health researchers.

Oregon's Citizens' Hearings would be presided over by 3-5 independent commissioners, chosen for their expertise and moral standing. They would hear testimony, examine evidence, deliberate and issue a final report on the evidence that was submitted. They could address the extent of the problem, the impacts on Oregon's economy and public health, possible human rights violations and recommended solutions.

The Citizens' Hearings would invite testimony from relevant experts and from citizens who have been impacted by exposure to pesticides. OTA seeks to give voice and validity to those who

have suffered from unwanted pesticide exposure.

Many pesticide issues are also human rights issues, so one key focus of OTA's hearings will be potential human rights impacts and violations. More information about this can be found at Environment and Human Rights Advisory, an NGO which helps environmental groups and government agencies understand and appreciate the human rights dimensions of their work.

Two limiting factors in holding such hearings would be financial costs and the significant time commitment to organize an event of this scale. OTA is currently exploring grant funding and donor support to make possible the first Citizens' Hearings in the United States.



## Fume Finale The End of Idling



That somber look of 7 year old Gwenyth peering out from above the gas mask sends a message that is being taken seriously around Lane County -- **Please don't idle your car – kids want to breathe clean air!**

Since we began our benzene reduction project last year, growing numbers of governments, agencies, school districts and businesses have actively joined OTA to put an end to topping off and idling. In addition to the benzene reduction policy adoption of Lane and Multnomah Counties, the city of Creswell and the 4J and South Lane School districts have also pledged to help keep the air around schools and neighborhoods free of benzene fumes.

Four automotive repair shops and Market of Choice have enthusiastically joined the campaign because they want to make sure car owners learn that idling is not good for the air or your engine. George Rode, owner of EuroAsian Automotive said he tries to remind his customers that the most efficient way to warm up the engine is to

**New!** Commissioner Faye Stewart and his family teamed up with OTA and Lane County Public Health for a public service announcement on benzene emissions. Watch for Faye and his children on Metro TV or go to our website!

[www.oregontoxics.org/benzene/psa.html](http://www.oregontoxics.org/benzene/psa.html)

just start driving it after twenty to thirty seconds from the time you turn the motor on. Krista Parent, Superintendent of the South Lane School District, points out that, "A simple way to reduce benzene in the air is to say 'no' the next time you are asked if you want your gas tank 'topped off.'"

OTA also wants to express our appreciation to the Spirit Mountain Community Fund who recently provided funding for OTA's benzene outreach program.



### Benzene Reduction Partners

#### Businesses

- Autohaus
- Capella Market
- EuroAsian Auto
- Green Eye Auto
- Imagine Graphics
- Jackson Auto Care
- Kiva
- Market of Choice
- Ninkasi Brewing Company
- Oregon Roads, Inc.
- Sandpiper Import Service
- Sequential Biofuels
- Sundance Natural Foods

#### Government Agencies

- 4-J School District
- City of Creswell
- Lane County Board of Commissioners
- Lane County Department of Health
- Lane Regional Air Protection Agency
- Multnomah County

## Toxic Soup (continued...)

Environmental Health, Oregon Environmental Council, and Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility. In just over a year, the groups have made tremendous strides.

Almost immediately, OCPWG began a series of Roundtables with various state and local agency staff. Together we have forged the Call for Safer Chemicals, a platform outlining the need for chemicals policy reform, and drafted a slate of policy options for the 2007 legislature to ban or reduce chemical use. The Roundtable is now recognized as the 'go to' group for technical expertise on chemical policy in Oregon.

OCPWG has also met twice with Mike Carrier, the Governor's natural resources director, and upper level representatives of Oregon's agencies to brainstorm ways to solve the toxics problem. These meetings were sparked by the Pesticide Workgroup and brokered by OTA.

Singly and collaboratively, OTA expects to introduce several toxics-related bills next session. We're expecting big results from these efforts. After all, OTA is used to swimming upstream (see accompanying article on Senate workgroup). It's only made us stronger!



# An End to Field Burning?

## Governor Proposes Field Burning Phase-Down



At the urging of Oregon Toxics Alliance, our members and some of our elected officials -such as Repre-

sentative Paul Holvey - Governor Kulon-goski has instructed the DEQ to submit a proposal to his office that would phase-down field burning in the Willamette Vallery. This is a victory to all who participated in our Ban Field Burning Campaign!

The details of the proposal - such as the rate of the phase-down or the target number of acres - have not yet been developed. The DEQ has asked OTA to participate in a "stakeholder process" during the summer and fall. We will go up against the Seed Council and other Big-Ag lobbyists.

OTA was informed that the DEQ will allow grass seed growers to "burn their backlog of fields that need burning up to the maximum acreage allowed" over the next few years before a phase-down is actually implemented.

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### Take Action

- **Keep the Pressure On!** Write letters and make phone calls to the Governor and DEQ . Urge them to develop a field burning phase-down based on public health and not grass seed interests.
- **File a Complaint!** Call in your complaints when field burning starts.
- **Volunteer or Join OTA.** We are strongest when you are involved!

### Contact Information

Governor's Line: (503) 378-4582  
DEQ Headquarters: (800) 452-4011

**Field Burning Complaint Line**  
Salem: (503) 986-4709  
Lane County: (541) 736-1056

OTA: (541) 465-8860



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