



October 22, 2008

Truth about the field burning ban

There has been a lot of hyperbole and misinformation flying around about the field burning ban. Oregon Toxics Alliance would like to bring some truth to this debate.

Will the burning ban increase pesticide use? No. Pesticides are used by grass seed farmers regardless of whether they burn or not. They have been used since 1940 when every acre could be burned (currently burning is limited to 65,000 acres statewide) and they're still used today.

In fact, burning creates a bigger problem, because when a field is sprayed and then burned, many of the toxins mix in with the smoke and drift through our yards, our homes and our towns.

Is the burning ban happening because of a vocal minority? No. Willamette Valley residents have been asking for relief from field burning for decades. Oregon Toxics Alliance has collected well over 500 signatures of people opposed to field burning just within Lane County.

In 2006, The Oregon Department of Agriculture and The Lane Regional Air Protection Agency (LRAPA) received over 700 complaints about field burning. And that only includes people who went through the trouble of finding a number to call and then followed through and made the call. The actual number of those opposed to burning is much, much higher.

In reality, the vocal minority is the few grass seed farmers left who refuse to let go of an outdated practice for which there are many alternatives.

The majority of us want a ban. We don't want to subsidize the profits of large grass seed operations with our health. Will burning will be banned? Yes.

— *John Herberg, Oregon Toxics Alliance, Eugene*
