

House Bill 53 Restores Alaskans' Rightful Role in Toxic Herbicide Spraying



Background: For decades, Alaska had strong safeguards in place to regulate the application of toxic herbicides and pesticides around our fish streams and drinking water supplies. In March 2013, the Parnell Administration issued [new rules](#) that eliminated Alaskans from decisions about spraying toxic pesticides and herbicides on state lands and rights-of-ways, and created a vague one-size-fits-all general permitting scheme to facilitate more spraying. Under the new rules, the Alaska Railroad and others may simply issue [generalized notice](#) about proposed spraying, with no details on when applications will occur or what waterbodies will be impacted. Not surprisingly, a broad coalition of municipalities and groups [opposed the changes](#) (and see [Alaska Community Action on Toxics](#) video [here](#)).

What's Happening Now: In January 2015, Representatives Kreiss-Tompkins and Ortiz filed [legislation \(HB 53\)](#) to restore common-sense safeguards for spraying toxic chemicals around our fish streams and drinking water sources. [Write a letter](#) to them saying you support Alaskans' right-to-know about toxic herbicide and pesticide applications!

More Information: In 2010, ADEC granted the Alaska Railroad a permit to spray herbicides from Seward to Indian, the first such permit in 26 years. In response, Inletkeeper joined groups and many communities affected by the spraying to submit petitions, [voice their concerns](#) and to challenge the permit. The lawsuit went all the way to the Alaska Supreme Court, where the court unfortunately sided with ADEC and allowed the spraying. In 2013, the Parnell Administration's regulation changes - issued by the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) - eliminated requirements to identify and safeguard the state's waters, including impacts to salmon streams, drinking water sources, wildlife habitat, and public health. Previous regulations required state agencies to obtain a permit to apply herbicides to state lands and right-of-ways, a process that included a public notice and comment period, and the opportunity for public hearings. Other state agencies could also weigh-in.

The Problems with Spraying Near Fish Streams & Drinking Water:

A major component of the most common herbicides is glyphosate, a non-selective herbicide that kills most plants, including grasses, and broadleaf and woody plants. Trade names for products containing glyphosate include Roundup, Rodeo, Aquamaster and Pondmaster. Glyphosate inhibits an [enzyme](#) involved in the synthesis of plants' amino acids, which eventually prevents the plant from growing and undergoing photosynthesis. Glyphosate also binds tightly to soil where it can persist in soil for up to 6 months depending on the climate and the type of soil it has penetrated. Studies funded by the chemical industry have shown that while pure glyphosate may be low in toxicity to humans, fish and wildlife ([Monsanto 2014](#)), some products containing glyphosate may be toxic because of other so-called "inert" ingredients such as surfactants. Surfactants help facilitate the uptake of glyphosate through plant leaf membranes and reduce the amount of glyphosate washed off plants by rain. These

surfactants – and specifically the surfactant polyethoxylated tallow amine (POEA) used in Roundup – create the greatest risk to [human health](#) and our environment. For example, research has shown the Roundup formula kills more fish at lower concentrations compared to pure glyphosate ([Folmar et al. 1979](#)). Studies have also shown that toxicity to humans is more acute and severe when the glyphosate is mixed with a surfactant such as POEA ([Bradberry et al. 2004](#)). Unfortunately the chemical industry lobby has successfully fought to keep the precise compositions of active and inert ingredients in popular herbicides and pesticides secret, under concerns over confidential business information. The risks to Alaska fisheries and public health are tangible. In 2013, the Alaska Railroad Corporation (ARRC) applied over 50,000 gallons of two herbicide mixtures to several hundred miles of rail road right-of-way between Seward and Fairbanks. While ARRC denies it sprays in and around water bodies, the nature of such an extensive spraying operation, coupled with the multitude of wetlands and waterbodies along the spray area, virtually guarantees herbicide contamination in adjacent waterbodies.

Take Action: Want to undo the Parnell Administration’s rollbacks on herbicide and pesticide spraying? Write to [Governor Bill Walker](#) and [Representative Kreiss-Tompkins](#). Tell them:

- You support House Bill 53;
- Alaskans have a right-to-know about toxic chemical spraying on our state lands and waterbodies;
- The Parnell Administration rules undermine our democracy and threaten our fisheries and our public health.

Resources:

- [Beyond Pesticides](#) works with allies to protect public health and the environment and to lead the transition to a world free of toxic pesticides.
- [Californians for Pesticide Reform](#) is a coalition of over 185 public interest groups dedicated to protecting human health and the environment from the dangers of pesticides.
- [Northwest Coalition for Alternatives to Pesticides \(NCAP\)](#) works to protect people and the environment by advancing healthy solutions to pest problems. Provide news and information on pesticide issues.
- [Pesticide Action Network’s Alternatives to Pesticides Database](#). The Pesticide Action Network (PAN) Pesticide Database is your one-stop location for toxicity and regulatory information for pesticides.
- [Pesticide Action Network North America \(PANNA\)](#). Organization that works to replace the use of hazardous pesticides with ecologically sound and socially just alternatives.
- [State of Alaska: State Pesticide Program](#)
- [State of Alaska: Public Notices and Proposed Regulations by the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation \(ADEC\)](#)
- [What’s on My Food: Pesticides on Food](#) is a searchable database designed to make the public problem of pesticide exposure visible and more understandable.

Alaska Railroad Corporation. 2013. "Alaska Railroad Herbicide Report".
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Alaska Railroad Corporation. 2014. "Notice of herbicide use on the Alaska Railroad system".
http://www.alaskarailroad.com/Portals/6/pdf/pr/2014_04_03_Herbicide_App_Notice_PR.pdf

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Folmar, L. C.; Sanders, H. O.; Julin, A. M. Toxicity of the herbicide glyphosate and several of its formulations to fish and aquatic invertebrates. *Arch. Environ. Contam. Toxicol.* 1979, 8, 269-278.

"Glyphosate". Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia. Wikimedia Foundation, Inc. 1 March 2015. Web. 3 March 2015. <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glyphosate>>.

Pesticide Information Profile, Extension Toxicology Network- Cooperative Extension Offices of Cornell University, Michigan State, Oregon State and University of California Davis.
<http://pmep.cce.cornell.edu/profiles/extoxnet/dienochlor-glyphosate/glyphosate-ext.html>

"Polyethoxylated tallow amine". Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia. Wikimedia Foundation, Inc. 27 February 2015. Web. 3 March 2015.
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polyethoxylated_tallow_amine>.

Reregistration Eligibility Decision (RED): Glyphosate; EPA-738-R-93-014; U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Prevention, Pesticides, and Toxic Substances, Office of Pesticide Programs, U.S. Government Printing Office: Washington, DC, 1993.