

June 26th, 2008

The Poisoning of the Watershed Continues...

I moved to Matilija Canyon less than 2 years ago, to a beautiful, sacred place, and to my horror, in September 2007, the county began to spray poisons into the watershed. According to a county Product Summary Report, between September 2007 – May 2008, the Ventura County Watershed Protection District has sprayed 10,962 pounds of glyphosate (not counting the surfactant added) into the watershed. Wow! That's a lot of poison.

And they are continuing to spray, because the arundo is growing back! (Maybe we'll have "super arundo" soon, that will have become glyphosate resistant ~ similar to the strains of viruses that have become resistant to antibiotics. There have been reports that weeds are becoming resistant to glyphosate, and farmers have to keep using more and more to kill off the weeds.) The county plans on continuing for at least another 4 years in their attempts to eradicate the arundo. A county biologist told me that it will just be "touch ups" (not so much glyphosate as before), to get the arundo that will continue to grow back.

I have felt the effects of the poisoning (nausea, headaches, bodyaches). During the month of October 2007, the county workers were spraying glyphosate (with surfactant added, plus a pretty blue- green color) near the dam. They were spraying with big hoses (like fire hoses) standing on lift platforms. The drift of the poison while they were spraying wafted into my car one day as I was driving out of the canyon, and I became immediately nauseous, and experienced bodyaches and a bad headache. (Just to let you know, I almost never have headaches, bodyaches or get nauseous, unless I'm in the midst of some chemical cloud.) I learned that it is very important to put the windows up and close up the vents in my car, if I plan on traveling through the canyon while they are spraying.

After massive amounts of glyphosate were sprayed from fire hoses near the dam water, the rains came. People, including myself noticed that the dam water looked unusually blue-green for quite a while. Perhaps that indicated that the glyphosate/ surfactant/ coloring mixture was washed into the dam water by the rains.

My son and his girlfriend have also felt the effects of the poisoning. She became so ill that she had to leave the canyon and doesn't want to come back until the poisoning is over.

Dripping backpacks of poison

On May 5th, I ran after some of the workers who were walking past my house with white chem suits and hoods with backpacks full of poison and sprayer wands in hand. I was able to talk with one of them who spoke English.

They had a lot of the blue-green poison dripping on their white suits from the backpacks. Really creepy... I asked the one worker if he ever felt sick, and he said he didn't, but there were others who felt sick and they were doing other work besides the spraying. I warned him that even though he may not feel an immediate effect like I do, that he should be careful because glyphosate is linked to serious illnesses, such as non-Hodgins lymphoma.

I would hope that the workers are being informed about the health risks of their job. Since the county insists that glyphosate is harmless, the workers probably aren't told anything about it.

Negative Environmental and Health Impacts of Glyphosate

Symptoms following exposure to glyphosate formulations include: swollen eyes, face and joints; facial numbness; burning and/or itching skin; blisters; rapid heart rate; elevated blood pressure; chest pains, congestion; coughing; headache; and nausea. It is also linked to chronic health effects.

A 1999 study, A Case-Control Study of Non-Hodgkin Lymphoma and Exposure to Pesticides, (American Cancer Society, 1999), found that people exposed to glyphosate are 2.7 times more likely to contract non-Hodgkin Lymphoma.

If you have a chance, take a look at this article: **New Evidence Establishes Dangers of Roundup in Top 25 Censored Stories for 2007**

<http://www.projectcensored.org/top-stories/articles/13-new-evidence-establishes-dangers-of-roundup/>

Denmark Restricts Water-Contaminating Herbicide

(Beyond Pesticides, September 23, 2003)

Denmark placed unprecedented restrictions on the herbicide glyphosate, the active ingredient in RoundUp, as of September 15, 2003. The government action resulted from testing which showed the presence of the toxic chemical in Denmark's groundwater, where most of the country's drinking water comes from. The Denmark and Greenland Geological Research Institution (DGGRI) had found glyphosate sieving down through soil after applications, where it polluted groundwater at a rate of five times more than the level allowed for drinking water...

http://www.beyondpesticides.org/news/daily_news_archive/2003/9_23_03.htm

Glyphosate spray drift from both ground and aerial applications has been measured from 400 to 800 meters from the target site. Studies have shown that Glyphosate drift will cause more severe and extensive damage than many other herbicides. This is because it is a broad spectrum, non-selective herbicide and it is transported throughout the plant causing damage to the unexposed parts. This damage, when it does not kill the plants, can last for many years. Drift that is one thousand times less than the usual application rates has been shown to damage surrounding vegetation, including the killing of wild plants.

This is an important reason why it should not be used in national parks and environmentally sensitive areas for weed control.

Pesticides do not stay where they are sprayed. A test was done at 10ft in the air with a 3 mile wind and the spray drifted 21 miles, which is why it is our right NOT to be exposed against our will. <http://stopthespray.com/>

The county is not stopping with Matilija Cyn. They are moving down through Meiners Oaks and into the Ventura River bed, on their way to the ocean.

“NON TREAT” written on the road

I have researched the effects of the poison, and have been communicating with the county to let them know that I do not want the poison sprayed on my land.

On June 17th, a county worker sprayed markers with red paint in front of my house on the road: "NON TREAT" written to designate each side of my property boundary, and markers 1/4 mile away in both directions: "CALL" ~ meaning they have to call me to let me know if they will be spraying within a 1/4 mile radius of my house.

You can call the Ventura County Public Works Inspector (ph: 646-0425) and make it clear that the county does not have permission to spray on your land. He actually told me that if we tell the county to not come on our land, they will not come on our land. He said it doesn't matter whether someone from the board of a property association signed a paper.

Let him know you do not give the county permission to come on your land and you want the spraying to stop.

It is our right NOT to be exposed to poisonous chemicals against our will. We, the people, remember?

Another case of glyphosate poisoning in the canyon

My neighbor, Rachel told me that she was leaving the canyon June 24th with her young son in the car. Around a certain bend in the road, she saw a group of county workers with sprayers on their backs spraying arundo on the side of the road. She didn't have time to put up her windows before the drift of the poison came into her car. She said she felt like her throat was on fire.

“I felt this intense burning in my throat,” said Rachel. “There was no warning sign on the road: Poison in the air. Roll up your windows.”

Rachel called the county to tell them not to spray on her land. Some county workers, including a county biologist came out to look on her land the next day, to make sure there

was no arundo. If there was any growing on her land, Rachel said she would be responsible for making sure it was removed (without toxic chemicals).

Rachel expressed her concern about the county poisoning the canyon (the land, the animals, the water and the people). “Who knows what will happen in 20 years? We could all develop some kind of cancer. It’s like we’re part of an experiment. We are the lab rats.”

“The biologist totally understood how I felt,” Rachel said. “He told me that if he lived back here, he would have the same concerns.”

With all our knowledge and ingenuity, I choose to believe that we, the people, can find a way to take care of our community, our land, our water and our air in safe and healthy ways. We can choose environmentally friendly methods to deal with “non-native” species. We can cut the arundo down, tarp it, dig it out, and keep tending it, without poisoning the land and ourselves.

The Precautionary Principle

"The Science and Environmental Health Network is working to implement the Precautionary Principle as a basis for environmental and public health policy. The principle and the main components of its implementation are stated this way in the 1998 Wingspread Statement on the Precautionary Principle:

"When an activity raises threats of harm to human health or the environment, precautionary measures should be taken even if some cause and effect relationships are not fully established scientifically. In this context the proponent of an activity, rather than the public, should bear the burden of proof. The process of applying the precautionary principle must be open, informed and democratic and must include potentially affected parties. It must also involve an examination of the full range of alternatives, including no action." – Wingspread Statement on the Precautionary Principle, Jan. 1998"

<http://www.sehn.org/precaution.html>

Lesson Learned From Acting Too Late

"Such a paradox is enshrined in our regulatory system, and embedded in our culture. When discussing, debating, or even legislating, we Americans will find that the burden of proof often falls on those raising concerns about the introduction or use of a certain product... rather than on those promoting or marketing the product. In other words, in many cases critics are compelled to prove, often beyond a scientific doubt, that a certain product or practice will have a harmful effect, rather than the manufacturer having to prove that it won't.

Historically, this mindset and framework has often resulted in a big mess and very expensive efforts to clean up the mess after-the-fact, rather than much more cost-effective initiatives to prevent the mess from happening in the first place."

<http://www.greenschools.net/report/precautionary.html>

A Call To Action

The county should be safeguarding our health, not spraying toxic chemicals into the watershed! Residents in Ventura County can call and/or write Ventura County Supervisor Steve Bennett and demand that the County stop poisoning the Matilija Watershed.

e-mail: steve.bennett@ventura.org

Supervisor Steve Bennett, L-1900

800 S. Victoria Ave.

Ventura, CA, 93009

phone: (805) 654-2703

fax: (805) 654-2226:

Let us envision and work towards making our county a pesticide/herbicide free zone

For more info, please send e-mail to: protectmatilija@gmail.com or call 639-3764

~ Patty Pagaling

Member ~ Pesticide Awareness and Alternatives Coalition