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Weyerhaeuser Testimony in Opposition to LD 125 An Act To Prohibit the Aerial Spraying of Glyphosate and Other Synthetic Herbicides for the Purpose of Silviculture

Senator Dill, Representative O’Neil and distinguished members of the Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Committee;

Weyerhaeuser owns and sustainably manages over 840,000 acres of timberland in Maine. Our timberlands make significant contributions to Maine’s forest economy each year while also supporting outdoor recreation, clean air and water, and healthy wildlife habitat.

Weyerhaeuser asks you to oppose LD 125, An Act To Prohibit the Aerial Spraying of Glyphosate and Other Synthetic Herbicides for the Purpose of Silviculture.

A ban on aerial spraying of herbicides for forestry would be short sighted, scientifically unjustified and economically damaging. Modern aerial herbicide application in forestry is precise, safe and effective. The following are some key facts regarding aerial application of herbicide as a silvicultural tool:

- Modern aerial herbicide application uses extremely accurate GPS systems to ensure herbicides are applied only on the target area. The spray block boundaries, sensitive areas and property boundaries are established by on-the-ground GPS data collection. This data is loaded into AG-NAV GPS in the helicopter allowing for precise application.
- Post treatment inspections ensure the efficacy of the treatment and verify protection of all streams, special areas, and external boundaries. This process is facilitated by a combination of tools including:
 - AG-NAV shape file maps - These aerial spray maps are used as a guide by the foresters when conducting post application inspections of the spray sites. The maps provide a means to concentrate the foresters’ time in the field to visually review potential areas of concern.
 - Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) Reconnaissance of spray tract for general overview of block coverage. The UAV is a tool for foresters to verify spray placement, and is followed up by a physical site visit the following spring.
 - Forester walk through evaluation of the spray block the spring following the herbicide application.
- Vegetative buffers are clearly evident around herbicide blocks after the herbicide has taken effect. The fact that herbicides kill vegetation means overspray beyond block boundaries would be obvious.

- The spray nozzles used in modern aerial herbicide application for forestry are designed to minimize drift. Nozzle type and orifice size are important factors in minimizing drift. Modern precision application systems such as the Accu-Flo™ aerodynamic systems with small tube-like nozzles produce a narrow range of droplet sizes. This narrow range in droplet size and the large Volume Mean Diameter (VMD) of the droplets with few small droplets makes them less susceptible to drift.
- The public is not allowed near the herbicide application. The spray block is checked before application and roads are swept to check for people. Once cleared, the roads are “gated” by a forester in a pickup truck who has direct radio communication to the Forester In Charge. Treated areas are posted with signs identifying that the area has been sprayed and providing information on the herbicide used and a phone number to call if an individual has additional questions.
- Herbicides used for silviculture are applied below EPA regulated label rates and only once or twice in the 40 to 80 year life of a stand of trees.
- Spruce/fir stands treated with modern aerial application of herbicide are known to support a broad diversity of flora and fauna including Canada Lynx, snowshoe hare, deer, Bay Breasted and Blackpoll warblers and many other songbirds (B W Rolek et al. 2018).
- The Maine Board of Pesticide Control (BPC) has the authority to regulate pesticides in Maine. At the request of the 129th Legislature, the BPC authorized an independent assessment by SCS Global Services of conformance to State of Maine pesticide use regulations by industrial forest management companies engaged in aerial application of herbicides on forestland. SCS reported: “At bottom line, no evidence was gathered during the course of the verification audit to contradict the following overall conclusion: The State of Maine regulatory framework, within which aerial application of herbicides in forest operations takes place, is functioning as designed,”.

Finally, healthy, fast growing forests play an important role in carbon sequestration. Modern aerial herbicide application in forestry is a tool that allows foresters to establish healthy, fast growing trees. These trees will capture carbon at a higher rate than unmanaged forests and, when harvested, the wood products produced will fuel our economy while locking up the carbon absorbed by the trees for long periods of time. Maine’s forest products industry has the ability to contribute to natural climate solutions by substituting carbon storing wood products for carbon intensive building products like concrete, steel and fiberglass and foam insulation.

Weyerhaeuser respectfully urges you to protect this proven silvicultural tool by voting Ought Not To Pass on LD 125.

Thank you.