

March 1, 2021

Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry

Cross Building, Room 214

Augusta, Maine

Dear ACF Committee Members,

I am writing to express our strong support for LD 125, An Act to Prohibit the Aerial Spraying of Glyphosate and Other Synthetic Herbicides for the Purpose of Silviculture. Our family has a two-generation farm in the Unorganized Territory of Central Aroostook County. We have been farming organically for 45 years and our main crop is Maine Certified Seed potatoes.

In addition to the great concerns we have over the negative environmental impact of the widespread spraying of Glyphosate on Maine forests and waterways, our family is also extremely troubled by the unacceptable risks of chemical trespass and off-target spray drift. Forty-two years ago in May 1979, after having appropriately registered with the State as a 300-acre spray-exempt area, we were negligently sprayed with 'Sevin' (Carbaryl) in that year's Spruce Budworm Suppression project (1). As a result of this spray trespass incident, we were barred from MOFGA organic certification for three years.

Jump forward four decades. A few winters back, industrial forestland directly adjacent to our farm and our certified organic fields was clearcut. Should the landowners decide to aerially spray herbicides for softwood release, there is little doubt of a catastrophe: unwanted toxins drift off-target, contaminate our crops, trigger loss of organic certification, ruin our reputation, annihilate the markets we've build over forty years and force us out of business, destroying our livelihoods and those of our dozen employees.

Over many decades, chemical trespass and environmental damage caused by industrial forest herbicide spraying has been a stubborn problem. The epic St. Regis Paper Company forest herbicide spray incident in Dennysville in 1979 is one example. Careless aerial spraying of *Tordon 101* (formulated as a combination of 2,4-D and 2,4,5-T, the latter chemical banned soon afterwards by U.S. EPA) by St. Regis caused widespread chemical drift trespass **up to twelve-miles off-target** and the destruction of at least 164 Washington County gardens (2).

The herbicide Glyphosate was determined in 2015 to be a "probable human carcinogen" by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), the research arm of the World Health Organization (WHO)(3). Subsequently, Glyphosate was listed as a carcinogen in California. In 2018, the California Supreme Court upheld California's placement of Glyphosate on its list of chemicals that cause cancer or birth defects.(4)

Astoundingly, a 2015 study indicates that even at **extremely low dosages of 0.1 ppb Glyphosate** causes damage to kidney and liver (5). For the purposes of comparison, incredibly enough, U.S. EPA allows 700 ppb of Glyphosate, or 7000 times the determined dangerous threshold in drinking water. (6)

Documents revealed in recent Monsanto Roundup Cancer lawsuits show a disturbing and inappropriately intimate relationship between Monsanto and EPA staffers (7). Additionally, Monsanto has been caught ghost-writing academic research which was dishonestly utilized by EPA in product registration reviews (8).

Once must conclude that when it comes to Monsanto and Glyphosate, the integrity of the EPA has been fully compromised and EPA is absolutely failing to protect the public interest.

Monsanto's century-long disregard for public health and the environment, and its entrenched pattern of deceit about its lucrative headliner product, Glyphosate, is unprecedented. It is now time for Maine to act to protect itself from Glyphosate.

As Mainers, we have a right to be secure in our homes, on our property, and on our farms. This right has been clear under English Common Law and extends back 800 years to the Magna Carta. Mainers have a right to protection from unwanted trespass, including chemical trespass. The Legislature should act now to insure that Maine citizens are protected in these rights.

I urge the members of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry to protect the residents, businesses and visitors to the North Maine Woods by safeguarding our water and the environment from damage caused by aerial herbicide spraying.

Please support LD 125 and ban the aerial spraying of deadly Glyphosate and other herbicides on Maine forest land.

Thank you.

Jim Gerritsen

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Wood Prairie Family Farm

Residence: TD R2 WELS Aroostook

Address: 49 Kinney Road

Bridgewater, Maine 04735

Footnotes.

1. *New York Times*. May 25, 1979. <https://www.nytimes.com/1979/05/25/archives/maine-woods-alert-spray-planes-coming-similar-effort-in-canada.html>
2. *New York Times*. Sept 16, 1979. <https://www.nytimes.com/1979/09/16/archives/paper-concern-to-pay-damages-to-gardeners-because-of-herbicides.html>
3. *Institute for Science in Society*. http://www.i-sis.org.uk/Banishing_Glyphosate.pdf

4. *Center for Food Safety*. <https://www.centerforfoodsafety.org/press-releases/5403/california-supreme-court-upholds-placement-of-glyphosate-on-states-carcinogens-list>
5. Study in *Environmental Health*.
<https://ehjournal.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12940-015-0056-1>
6. *Michigan Public Radio* Coverage of *Environmental Health* study.
<https://www.michiganradio.org/post/new-study-finds-low-doses-roundup-might-be-tied-liver-and-kidney-damage>
7. *Rolling Stone*. <https://www.rollingstone.com/politics/politics-features/monsanto-cancer-710902/>
8. *New York Times*. August 1, 2017.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/01/business/monsantos-sway-over-research-is-seen-in-disclosed-emails.html>