

EPA Puts Limits On 3 Pesticides

PHUONG LE Associated Press Writer — September 14, 2009

SEATTLE (AP) — The Environmental Protection Agency revealed new limits Friday on three pesticides commonly used on western farms to protect endangered and threatened Pacific salmon.

The restrictions announced Friday apply to the use of chlorpyrifos, diazinon and malathion near salmon waters in Washington, California, Oregon and Idaho.

The chemicals have been found by the U.S. Geological Survey to interfere with salmon's sense of smell, making it harder for them to find food, avoid predators and return to native waters to spawn, according to federal biologists.

The new regulations come after anti-pesticide groups and salmon fisherman sued the federal government in 2001 for not considering the impact of pesticides on federally protected salmon and steelhead.

"These limitations ... will protect Pacific salmon and steelhead while providing for appropriate pesticide use," said Steve Owens, assistant administrator for EPA's Office of Prevention, Pesticides and Toxic Substances.

The new rules prohibit the use of these pesticides within a range of 100 feet and 1,000 feet of salmon waters, depending on size of the river or stream, application rate and other criteria.

It's a major step forward but "we're concerned that EPA's alternative won't be enough to keep these poisons out of salmon waters," said Joshua Osborne-Klein, an attorney for Earthjustice, the public-interest law firm in Seattle that brought the case.

Steve Bradbury, EPA's deputy office director for the Office of Pesticide Programs, said the goal was to ensure the chemicals are used safely to protect salmon but also can be used effectively for food.

Chlorpyrifos is known by trade names such as Dursban and Lorsban. Malathion is sold under trade names such as Fyfanon and Celthion. Diazol is one trade name under which Diazinon is sold.

The three chemicals are banned from household use, but tens of million pounds are still applied on a wide range fruits, vegetables, cotton and livestock to control termites, mosquitoes, flies and other pests, according to NOAA Fisheries Service.

Heather Hansen, executive director of Washington Friends of Farms and Forests, said the new rules will make it tougher for farmers and growers to control damaging

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pests.

"We feel that the current labels are already protective, and the data shows that our growers are already keeping pesticides out of waters," she said.

Terry Witt with Oregonians for Food and Shelter, a coalition of agricultural and forestry growers based in Salem, Ore., said the rules were "far more excessive than what's necessary."

The EPA is asking manufacturers to voluntarily adopt the new restrictions. New labels could be available as early next spring.

In a statement, Dow AgroSciences, a primary manufacturer of chlorpyrifos, said the EPA's approach is "more highly conservative that is perhaps warranted" but the company will work to implement the restrictions.

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