

An Oregon Strategy for Collecting Unwanted Pesticides



Photos courtesy Washington State Department of Agriculture



Photo from Milton-Freewater Ag Collection_2008



Photo courtesy Washington State Department of Agriculture

What's the problem?

When pesticide products are banned, replaced, outdated or damaged, the resulting wastes often accumulate for years because of the lack of cost-effective or convenient disposal options. Over time product or waste containers degrade, increasing risks of pesticide releases to the environment. Given that harmful levels for many pesticides in surface and groundwater are measured in parts per billion, the release of pesticides from even one container can have a major environmental or public health impact. Many of these unwanted pesticides are high priorities for environmental impact reduction by the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, Oregon Health Authority, Oregon Department of Agriculture, US EPA, and other agencies because of their documented effects on humans and aquatic life.

These agencies and other concerned groups realize that a strategy is needed to improve pesticide collection throughout Oregon. Too many areas of the state lack easily accessible and low-cost hazardous waste collection and disposal options. Agricultural producers and other commercial applicators – especially in Oregon's sparsely populated areas – would be among the beneficiaries of an improved pesticide collection program, as well as anyone else who needs to safely dispose of pesticides. Oregon regulations (OAR 340- 109-0010) require some basic management practices for waste pesticides. Ensuring delivery of waste pesticides to a collection event is an easy and cost-effective way of complying with those requirements.

Below, the state of Oregon outlines its projected long-term and short-term goals for bolstering pesticide collection, plus a request for short-term help.

Recent success in collecting pesticide wastes

Since 2006, a diverse array of agencies and organizations have worked together to sponsor and conduct 10 pesticide waste collection events in Oregon, with the goal of protecting water quality and providing a needed service to Oregon growers and pesticide applicators. More than 200,000 pounds of pesticide waste have been collected and properly disposed to date, with one-time grant funds as the primary source of support. Most recently, two events, held for Marion County and Clackamas County pesticide applicators in 2011, collected over 56,000 pounds of pesticides from 108 participants. The fact that these events attracted large numbers of participants and removed significant quantities of pesticide wastes from vulnerable watersheds shows that collaborative partnerships can



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produce tangible benefits for Oregon's citizens, environment and businesses. In addition, DEQ's contract with a hazardous waste management company to provide a variety of chemical waste collection services ensures that these collection events are cost efficient. This contract provides an existing infrastructure and reasonable pricing schedule for collection and disposal.

Remaining challenges

In watersheds where multiple pesticide collection events took place over the past six years, quantity of waste collected usually increased with each successive event. The chart below illustrates increased pounds collected at pesticide waste collection events in the Marion-Clackamas County region:

Marion-Clackamas County Pesticide Waste Collection Events

Event Location	Year	Pounds Collected
Mt. Angel	2006	16,500
Donald	2007	17,500
Clackamas	2009	18,500
Clackamas	2011	35,000*

* Quantity of waste collected at the first of two events held in 2011 at this location

These results suggest that the quantity of pesticide wastes remaining to be collected in Oregon is likely much greater than the amount collected to date. In addition, only a small area of the entire state has been served by these recent collection events.

In Washington state, where there is dedicated funding for agriculture pesticide waste collections, more than 2.7 million pounds of pesticide wastes have been collected over the past 25 years. Further, a survey conducted during a fall 2011 collection event revealed that almost all participants would participate in a future collection event.

These facts clearly demonstrate the need for more pesticide waste collection events and the resources to support these events. This is why Oregon DEQ identifies pesticide waste collections as a high-priority action in its draft *Toxics Reduction Strategy*.

- Local governments and community drinking water providers
- Watershed councils
- Grower groups
- Pesticide product suppliers
- Soil and water conservation districts
- Federal agencies (Environmental Protection Agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service, National Marine Fisheries Service, and others)
- Tribal governments



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due to excessive quantities in storage, often in deteriorating containers.

Partnering organizations identified to help provide financial and in-kind program implementation assistance include:

- State agencies (Departments of Environmental Quality, Agriculture, and Forestry; Oregon Health Authority, Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, and others)
- Oregon State University Extension Service

Short-term needs and a request for help

While a stable, long-term funding source for providing pesticide collection is developed, additional targeted collection events will increase awareness of the need for this service while protecting drinking water, water quality, aquatic life and people who eat fish and shellfish.

Partners are needed to fund two or three pesticide collection events in Oregon in 2012 and 2013 at a projected cost of \$30,000 per event.

Targeted areas for pesticide collection include:

- Yamhill River Watershed
- Southern Oregon Coast/ Rogue River Basin
- Northeast Oregon and Malheur County

These areas were selected based on known agricultural and other land uses, and the absence of available and convenient pesticide waste collection services in the areas. In addition, local watershed or agricultural extension services have expressed interest in holding such events in these locations, further underscoring the need for these events.

Long-term strategy objectives for pesticide collection

A broad group of Oregon interested agencies and organizations met in late 2011 to identify objectives and needs for a statewide strategy to collect unwanted and unused pesticides. Based on participation and costs associated with previous events, the group determined that \$30,000 was the average target budget for each event. The group set a goal of conducting four to five collection events per year, which translates into a needed budget of \$150,000 per year.

The strategy includes a list of priority watersheds around the state; the objective is to offer convenient pesticide collection services to each area of the state every two to three years. This ensures that accumulations of waste pesticides are kept to manageable levels and minimizes the risk of pesticides releasing to the environment

Contact

For more information about pesticide collection events and partnering opportunities, please contact Kevin Masterson at Oregon DEQ at 503-229-5615 or masterson.kevin@deq.state.or.us.

