

August 19, 2026

To: Legislative Committee for the Review and Oversight of the TRPA...

We want to share our concerns about the impacts of synthetic herbicides, such as Glyphosate, on the health and functions of soil resources and consequences locally and watershed-wide.

Herbicides such as glyphosate are not a wise choice for hardly any reason in a wide-area application such as proposed by USFS to avoid plant competition for the benefit of the timber industry.

As career soil scientists with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, the use of glyphosate is of great concern to us. Glyphosate, like other synthetic herbicides are known to adversely affect the microbial ecosystems of soil – the ecosystems that sustain the health of nutrient exchange and so much more – by preventing growth and causing death of “competitive” plants. We have worked for decades assisting farmers, ranchers, and private forestland owners to voluntarily reduce or eliminate the use of synthetic herbicides in ways that maintain desired crop productivities and protect other natural resources: water, wildlife, air, etc.

When a soil ecosystem is disturbed or chemically altered it can lead to serious problems – problems that will be known to occur, not just speculatively. One simple example is the loss of healthy root systems that are essential to hold soil in place and to prevent erosion. After a wildfire, soil is vulnerable to erosion as plants re-establish slowly and do not spread rapidly, especially in very hot fires that can cause the alteration of the soil ecosystem to deeper levels in the soil profile. Plant cover should be encouraged after a fire to re-establish the erosion-protecting soil cover. Applying glyphosate can hinder this revegetation process and cause serious consequences to the flora and fauna of the soil ecosystem and to the overall environment. Carbon sequestration is interrupted which further impacts global warming. Once soil is eroded away, it is non-reversible and negatively impacts downstream and downhill landscapes. Soil out of place is pollution, is contaminant transport, and can seriously affect riparian and lake ecosystems.

Hindering broad suppression of emergent plants can cause the soil to become warmer and drier which also negatively affects soil ecosystems and vulnerability to sediment transport. I urge the US Forest Service and TRPA to seriously consider alternative options to synthetic herbicides.

For millennia, forests have evolved to accommodate not only trees, but the vast numbers of other flora and fauna that support a healthy ecosystem. Trees will grow regardless of competition plants. Additionally, plants often thrive best when diversity is in the system, particularly biodiverse soil ecosystems. Brush and grasses also provide shade for saplings and other emergent vegetation.

In our opinion, if TRPA supports use of Glyphosate, it's indicative of the erosion of the core values of protecting the environment.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment.

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