



Bill Dobson, Warden, Lanark County
Council of the Corporation of the County of Lanark
Lanark County Administration Building
99 Christie Lake Road
Perth, ON K7H 3C6
April 7, 2017

Dear Members of Council:

Re: Herbicide spraying on Lanark County roadsides to control wild parsnip

The Mississippi Valley Field Naturalists (MVFN), representing over 300 members from all areas of Lanark County, wishes to express our concern, shared by many residents, regarding Lanark County's 2017 plans to spray a significant length of County roadsides with a herbicide as a measure aimed at controlling the occurrence and spread of wild parsnip.

The herbicide (Clearview) is a broad spectrum agent which, while targeting wild parsnip and other invasive plants, will also kill many non-noxious exotic and native species common to roadside ditches in this part of Ontario, including many flowering plants which provide sustenance for pollinators and other insects that form part of our ecosystem.

As stated on the Material Safety Data Sheet for the product, Clearview is known to be highly toxic to fish and other aquatic organisms and should be prevented "from entering into soil, ditches, sewers, waterways and/or groundwater". A Dow AgroScience bulletin is more direct, stating that "the use of this chemical may result in contamination of groundwater particularly in areas where soils are permeable (e.g., sandy soil) and/or the depth to the water table is shallow. To reduce runoff from treated areas into aquatic habitats avoid application to areas with a moderate to steep slope, compacted soil, or clay". The principal active ingredient for this herbicide, aminopyralid, is considered not to be readily biodegradable and it's mobility in soil is very high. Consequently, it has been banned in some European countries due to concerns that it will move through the soil zone and enter groundwater.

Given that Lanark County is well recognized for its many wetlands and streams as well as its rugged topography and rocky nature where highly vulnerable bedrock aquifers are exposed at ground surface or under a thin cover of soil, the roadside application of a herbicide such as Clearview entails significant risks even when applied under the most controlled conditions. Current setbacks (10 m) between water bodies and sprayed areas may be insufficient in many parts of the County to prevent runoff of the pesticide into water bodies. As well, with groundwater discharge providing a major source of water to most streams and wetlands, contamination of the shallow water table may lead to additional influx of herbicide to these features.

It is the opinion of the MVFN that, given the risks posed by broadcast application of Clearview or other similar herbicides, the County should focus its efforts on wild parsnip control through non-chemical means, particularly mowing at appropriate times of the year prior to flowering. The County should also carry out a very public campaign to inform its residents of the potential dangers of contact with wild parsnip and how to recognize this and other noxious invasive plants. No matter the scale of our efforts, wild parsnip, like poison ivy, will always be with us and we should deal with its presence through education and mechanical control, not through the widespread application of herbicides.

Sincerely yours,

Brenda Boyd,
President MVFN