

2,4-D draws Sooke protest

By BRENDA DALGLISH

The Sooke Forum Council Wednesday attacked the use of the herbicide 2,4-D by B.C. Hydro.

Hydro has a Pollution Control Branch permit to use the herbicide in an unspecified 200-acre area between Sooke and Jordan River for stump treatment and brush control.

But a number of residents fear the chemical will contaminate wells in the area.

The council, at its regular meeting, passed a motion to have a public hearing on the permit held in Sooke.

Well contamination feared

Some members of the public and the council are dissatisfied with the appeal procedure available for opposing the use of the herbicides.

"Every time we file a complaint Hydro goes right ahead anyway," noted one person at the meeting.

"I think we're losing the whole concept of democracy if these people don't listen to our protests," said council member Bill Wilson.

Although regulations require that the herbicide not

be applied within 10 metres of any waterways, residents are concerned that heavy rains could wash the substance into waterways and possibly into wells.

Wells are the only source of water for residents of the area.

Council member Hans Felderhof suggested that, instead of applying the herbicide by hand to selected areas as the PCB permit recommends, Hydro hire students to clear bush by hand.

But Sooke regional director Don Rittaler disagreed with the general mood of concern.

"Surely we have enough responsible people in the environment ministry that they're not just going to go out and destroy the environment," Rittaler said in arguing that the herbicide has not been proven dangerous to humans.

The herbicide has been banned in the U.S. until further evidence is produced to show that it isn't harmful.

"You hear about experts saying 2,4-D is harmless but I've lost faith," said Felderhof.

One member of the audience wanted to know if the people who signed the permits allowing the use of the chemical could be charged with manslaughter if a death occurred as a result.

"My point is public officials should be held accountable for their decisions," the man said.

Appeals of permits granted by the PCB are

heard by an appeal board made up of professionals who are knowledgeable about pesticides but who are not employed by the ministry of the environment.

A spokesman for the branch said permits can be revoked or altered if those launching the appeal can convince the board that use of the chemical might be harmful.

The spokesman cited an example in which 12 people last year convinced the board that using a herbicide along the E and N railway tracks might be harmful.

BC Hydro and pesticides



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