



MEMORANDUM

TO: Chuck Ross, Secretary of Agriculture, Food and Markets
CC: John Hollar, Mayor of Montpelier, VT
FROM: James Ehlers, Lake Champlain International *JE*
John Snell
SUBJECT: Herbicide permit for railroad in Montpelier
DATE: July 22, 2015

Vermont Statutes acknowledge the dangers of pesticides to life and health, and call for the creation of benchmarks -- not yet established-- by which pesticide use may be reduced, including an increase in areas managed by alternatives [6 VSA Sec. 1102 (d)(4,6)]. Revision of Regulations for the Control of Pesticides has been stalled once again, delaying the important work of updating regulations that are now nearly a quarter of a century old, a risk in itself to public health and safety.

Montpelier citizens' request for alternative weed management on the Washington County Railroad in their town last year and this year would comply with VT law, contribute to pesticide reduction, and protect humans, wildlife and water quality.

While a small portion of the railroad will remain herbicide-free this year, several aspects of the current situation need correction for the future:

1. **Problem:** Citizens have urged a no-spray area from I-89 to Pioneer Street.
Solution: Create herbicide-free area from I-89 Interchange to Pioneer Street to protect people and food at the Hunger Mountain Coop, and those living in apartments near the railroad at Granite Street.

2. **Problem:** The permit fails to call for water quality testing in the Winooski. **Solution:** VAAF, ANR and USGS need to establish water quality testing protocol in the Winooski River in Montpelier.

3. **Problem:** Charging the town for costs of alternatives sets a bad precedent. **Solution:** Hold the Washington County Railroad responsible for costs of the alternative management, not the taxpayers of Montpelier.

4. **Problem:** Citizens were largely shut out of the decision-making process. **Solution:** Create a public and accountable process that can establish solutions for 2016 and following years that will include knowledgeable local citizens and hold the Railroad accountable to definitive process.

5. **Problem:** Pesticide regulations need to be updated, but VAAF personnel have been diverted to other work.

Solution: Open the Pesticide Regulations to Public Comment, and charge VPAC with gathering a working group of NGO's, knowledgeable citizens and other stakeholders to work on the regulations.

We will call for a meeting on these points in the near future. Please respond to James Ehlers of Lake Champlain International and to John Snell of Montpelier, VT.