

Supervisors ban use of glyphosate

L.A. County work crews to no longer use controversial herbicide

- The Signal
- 22 May 2019
- By Jim Holt Signal Senior Staff Writer jholt@signalscv.com 661-287-5527 On Twitter [@jamesarthurholt](https://twitter.com/jamesarthurholt)

County supervisors, citing the same number of worrisome scientific studies that convinced them in March to place a 30-day ban on the use of glyphosate, have banned the controversial herbicide from being used by county work crews anywhere in the county.

Commonly referred to as Roundup, glyphosate is a key ingredient in the commercial brand by that name. Roundup is a well-known and effective weed abatement method used by many public and private entities.

On Tuesday, the L.A. County Board of Supervisors voted 4-0 in favor of directing all county departments to ban the use of glyphosate-based products.

Supervisors Sheila Kuehl and Kathryn Barger submitted the motion to the board for consideration. Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas was absent Tuesday.

“Their motion brings the issue to next level of a permanent ban,” Barger spokesman Tony Bell said after the board meeting.

At the root of their concerns is the health of county residents.

Health concerns

In their notes to fellow supervisors, Kuehl and Barger pointed out “a growing concern about the safety of glyphosate and its effects on human health.”

In 2015, the International Agency for Research on Cancer, an agency of the World Health Organization, classified glyphosate as “probably carcinogenic to humans,” they wrote in their notes.

In two recent California court cases, they pointed out, juries found that exposure to glyphosate caused cancer in two individuals.

County residents living near previously active glyphosate application sites have voiced concerns about its effects on human, animal and environmental health, they wrote.

With this approved motion, supervisors also want the director of Public Works to join with county counsel, public health officials, and parks and recreation heads, so that they can work with herbicide experts to find different ways of controlling weeds.

Alternatives sought

They expressed some urgency in finding a suitable alternative to Roundup, which contains glyphosate, given the current “problematic” use of alternatives in sensitive areas, such as habitat restoration.

They also want county officials to reach out to the public for a possible alternative to the chemical.

County officials have 180 days to come up with a feasible alternative way to manage weeds. On March 19, supervisors placed a 30-day ban on the use of glyphosate.

Prior to the temporary ban, county work crews used the chemical to kill weeds on parks, trails, roadways, flood control facilities, county-owned buildings, vacant land and all county property.

Use in watershed Glyphosate has been used along the Santa Clara River Watershed in an effort to curb the spread of the invasive weed, arundo, according to a 2006 report by the Ventura County Resource Conservation District.

Similar efforts to fight arundo in the city of Santa Clarita and across Los Angeles County have also involved the use of glyphosate.

Ripping the arundo from watershed areas in the San Francisquito Creek has, in the past, involved daubing the arundo stumps with glyphosate, according to a report compiled by the California State Coastal Conservancy.

Bridgeport HOA

Some residents living in the Valencia community of Bridgeport have signed a petition to get their homeowners association — Bridgeport HOA — to stop using Roundup which contains glyphosate.

“We have a petition in place,” concerned Bridgeport resident Randy Martin said Tuesday. Phone and email messages asking about the use of Roundup were left with the Bridgeport HOA Tuesday afternoon and were not returned.

Before the ban

Before the ban, Roundup was the county’s most useful tool in “vegetation control.”

Kerjon Lee, spokesman for the county’s Department of Public Works, shared some notes about the department’s use of glyphosate before the ban.

Unchecked vegetation growth has “several adverse” impacts, he said. The aesthetics are one concern, since weeds are not attractive. But the unchecked growth also contributes to a fire hazard and rodent infestation, both of which also represent serious health risks.

Herbicides such as glyphosate are part of the county’s arsenal when it comes to managing weeds. They are a component of its Vegetation Maintenance Program, Lee said.

In an email sent last month, Lee said: “Public Works has depended on the use of Roundup as an herbicide to manage vegetation along the county’s public infrastructure and facilities, such as the edges of roadways, medians, flood channel right of ways, debris basins, dams, public stations, water tanks and field offices.”