

For Immediate Release:

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**CETOS' Critical Habitat Project completes Gualala Basin Pesticide Inventory:
Half Ton of Pesticides Used in 2001**

Gualala, CA: The Critical Habitat Project of the Center for Ethics and Toxics (CETOS) has just completed an inventory of pesticide usage in the Gualala River watershed. The Gualala-based environmental organization discovered 1250 pounds of pesticide active ingredients were used in forestry and vineyard operations in 2001 (the most current data available from the California Department of Pesticide Regulation).

Coho salmon and steelhead trout, once abundant in the Gualala River, are now officially listed as threatened with extinction. Pesticide use in the watershed could further reduce their chances of survival. A detailed inventory of pesticide usage by site and product enables scientific evaluation of that risk.

Britt Bailey, the project's director stated, "According to 2001 data, timber companies, such as Gualala Redwoods, Inc. which owns 35,000 acres of the Gualala watershed, tend to use a single herbicide, imazapyr. Imazapyr is marketed by the trade names Chopper and Arsenal. The primary concern with imazapyr is its persistence. Imazapyr takes 7-18 weeks to lose half of its potency after it is applied to soil. Imazapyr is also mobile in soils, making it a possible ground and surface water contaminant. The good news is that the chemical does not appear to be highly toxic to either humans or aquatic organisms. But, from an ecological perspective, the chemical does not discriminate between target plants and non-target plants. So, if rare and endangered plants are in the areas of spray, they will not survive."

In addition to looking at forestry pesticide usage, Bailey examined vineyard pesticide usage surrounding Buckeye Creek, the South Fork, and Wheatfield Fork of the Gualala River watershed. "When I began to look at what was being used, I was surprised to find some dangerous pesticides were being applied in the local vineyards. For example, 130 pounds of a fungicide called mancozeb is used. This fungicide is not only considered moderately to highly toxic to fish, but also is a chemical known to the State of California to cause cancer. Oryzalin, another applied herbicide, is known to be highly toxic to fish," says Bailey. Glyphosate (the active ingredient in the well-known Roundup®) is also a widely used herbicide in vineyard operations.

CETOS' new program, the Critical Habitat Project, is examining the pesticide usage in California watersheds in order to conduct site-specific assessments of the risk to endangered and threatened species. For more information about the program including maps, tables, etc..., see <http://www.cetos.org/criticalhabitat/> or call 707- 884-1700.