

Risk of Using Chemicals Has Not Changed- LTE *Bisbee Observer* (October 11, 2012)

How disappointing to see the Bisbee city council proposing to enter again, this time by ordinance, the vicious arena of chemical danger versus public health. The alleged “safety” of herbicides (the EPA itself assiduously avoids that slippery term in regard to weedkillers) is based not on proved absence of adverse effects on people and the environment, but entirely on such totally political concepts as “acceptable risk.” Surely, I would hope, no city official feels herself or himself so all-wise as to decide how many cancers, miscarriages, birth defects or other documented health effects from herbicide use are “acceptable” for residents and visitors to the city.

To overturn bans on public use of herbicides that city councils have upheld since 1983, including the April 2000 decision to follow the no-herbicide recommendations of the city’s appointed Vegetation Management Committee, is at the very least poor public policy. For elected city officials, especially lame duck officials, to take upon themselves such responsibility, especially on such blatantly insupportable grounds as “necessity,” goes well beyond civic duty into the realm of arrogant hubris and (for those who were dissenting members of the 2000 council) simply sour grapes.

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