

**Interview with Eron King on Friday, April 17, 2015**

**Interview conducted by Arielle Shamash, Hope Tejedas, and Laura Nausieda**

**Eron King (EK):** My name is Eron King, how do I describe myself? Persistent, probably. I try to be headstrong, state facts, although I have lots of opinions.

**Interviewer (I):** What do you do on a daily basis? What does your daily routine look like?

**EK:** Okay. Well I homeschool, so that definitely makes up my routine, farming, I have goats and chickens, so I get up every morning and milk the goat, make breakfast, have school, and then I do work for the nonprofits I'm involved with.

**I:** So what prompted you to move to Triangle Lake? What made you choose Triangle Lake?

**EK:** We had looked all over Eugene, so, both east...In fact we lived in other areas around Eugene and we came out here and just fell in love with it out here. Especially this watershed. Being around the rivers is just amazing for us, and just around the forested mountains. That is what we had been looking for so...nature. And we wanted to get away from the neighbors.

**I:** So what was your first experience with logging and aerial pesticide spray around here?

**EK:** The first experience with the aerial spraying was in March of 2008. Seneca Jones was spraying a parcel that we could see from my kids' bedroom window. I like to say that because I think that's important, that's how close it was. I was in my kids' bedroom. So, that's what prompted the experience: watching it from my house, knowing it is happening a lot.

**I:** So what impact has the pesticides had on your life?

**EK:** Well generally, actually we'll start more specific. We definitely had health effects. When they were spraying heavily, in 2010 and 2011, my kids developed really bad coughs, especially my youngest, to the point where he would vomit. My oldest was having a lot of nosebleeds, but I didn't associate that with pesticides at the time, but we left for a month to go visit some friends in Hawaii and the nosebleeds stopped and the cough stopped. After just a week of being there. We came back, the cough started up again. So healthwise, my partner and I have both been through some health issues. Mine have gone away since the spraying stopped, I've stopped seeing mine. My partner is still kind of dealing with some issues, so we'll just see what happens. On a wider scale, it's interesting to see the impact on the community, because this community is heavily a logging community, as a log truck rolls by, so it is very divided. So we've made friends, and I'd say almost enemies. Because the issue is so heated that people are just very headstrong about their opinion about it. And it's interesting because of the Beyond Toxics town hall here that we had, we were able to sit down with some neighbors that we had not talked to civilly, before. And it was interesting to ask them questions straight up about, you know, we are having health effects, it's very

apparent to us, and I don't understand why you're not, but we are. What are we going to do about this? So, it's just interesting to sit down and talk to them like real people because it's been so debated, a lot of yelling, you know. And then also it's been interesting because all of the rules and regulations that dominate the forest practices act is so old. It really needs to be changed. So reading about all these laws that govern our lives, it was really apparent to me that we, as citizens, of the forest have no rights when it comes to what is happening around us. I'm completely surrounded by Weyerhaeuser, Seneca Jones, and they can do whatever they want. That road you came down, they can spray that, because it's right up against their unit. So they can spray the road right there if they wanted to. So its been a really good learning journey through all this. So yeah, its been a huge impact. Its completely changed the direction of my life really, I mean, I don't know what I did before 2008 with all this work that I'm doing now, like what did I do before and I'm not quite sure because its definitely dominated my life, it's like I can't stop until it stops. Because I don't want to move and if they continue to spray, I mean we've talked about moving. This is our paradise, we don't want to move from here, but if they don't stop spraying, if we can't get them to stop spraying, what am I doing to my kids? They tested positive for atrazine and 2,4-D, thats a cocktail. Nobody knows what that's going to do to my kids.

**I:** So would you say that was one of the hardest moments for you?

**EK:** Oh yeah that was huge. Just the actual confirmation. I mean, we knew they were being exposed, and we knew there were consequences, but to have it straight up in your face like, yes there are concentrations of these poisons in your children is heart wrenching and to know its still going on, and to know that other communities, after the proof, other communities have been exposed. It's not right.

**I:** So what would you say catalyzed your involvement in the issue? Was it your kids getting affected? Was it witnessing the spray firsthand?

**EK:** It was definitely witnessing it firsthand and then doing more research about it. And the kids, for sure are a huge catalyst because we don't want to move, like we said, and yeah I don't want to continue having them be poisoned. And so yeah, I try to find any way I can to make a change.

**I:** So how do you react to people who don't believe this is happening or deny the effects of pesticide spray?

**EK:** I don't know, I mean I've talked to a neighbor who mixes the stuff on a seasonal basis to spray the stuff on his fields, and he says he's fine, he has no health effects. And okay, I believe you, but you need to believe me when I say I have had health effects. Correlation, I mean I filmed the spray, a week later my problems showed up. Then they would go away. I would film a spray, they would show up. Direct correlation to being exposed to pesticides. There's no question about it. I don't know. I mean everyone's body is different, everyone's

body reacts to things differently, sure you may not be affected, but you need to understand that some people are affected, very very greatly. And yeah, go stand out next to a spray, that's all I gotta say.

**I:** So I know that they have given you over 75 spray notices, do those make a difference? Do you have an example of one that you could show us?

**EK:** Yeah, I could probably find one. Do they make a difference? Well, they don't make a huge difference, because the window of time they give us, 6 months, nowadays its almost a year on the notice, so it doesn't really help. They give you a number to call, and I was calling Weyerhaeuser and getting a little bit of a window of when they might spray, but then they found out I was recording their sprays and stopped returning my phone calls. But overall, it tells you what they might spray, and through the research that Lynn Bowers did, she found out that they were spraying a good chunk of what was on that list. The mixtures. So overall, the only way these notifications are going to help us is if they give us the exact time of day, and that's still not going to help, you know, because I can't pack up my chickens and my goats and take them with me to the coast; that's unrealistic. So why would they think that notification is going to help us? Because I eat those eggs, and I drink that milk, so if those guys are exposed then we're still exposed. So, I'm sorry, it just needs to end. We need to stop trying to regulate it and just work towards ending it. It's the only way it's going to make any difference. The National Forest has already shown us that it's possible.

**I:** Has the water been effected at all? Has your local water supply been affected? Because I know that was a huge issue for people in Curry County.

**EK:** Yeah, so I want to say it was in 2011 we worked with a retired DEQ personnel and we tested Fish Creek, we tested Lake Creek, and we tested a couple creeks down the watershed and a couple creeks up the watershed, and we found pesticides. We found degradation of atrazine, and we found hexazinone, there were a couple more, I can't think of what they are. But this one particularly tested positive, Fish Creek has really been affected because in 2010, Winter 2009-2010, they clearcut the headwaters of Fish Creek, and I made a big stink. I went to the Board of Forestry every month, I would always find something on the agenda to relate to my issue, whether it be water, wildlife, whatever. I could always bring it back to, look, they're clearcutting the headwaters, we need more regulation here on these logging operations because they are not being regulated, they are not being watched, I mean it decimated Fish Creek, it's lower than its ever been, it's warmer than its ever been, and this is a designated fish salmon habitat, so there's specific criteria that they have to uphold to, and its impaired for sure. Fish Creek we also found results of pesticides in it, and this is upstream from where Fish Creek comes into it, so it didn't, you know, get both those results. Several places like Lake Creek. Yeah, so it's impacted the water greatly. We went up and tested the water in Triangle Lake, the school, and found imazapyr and that is what they sprayed on the hill behind the school. The clearcut hill behind the school, they hack and squirt, so they hack into the tree and they squirt it. I filmed that particular operation and that was the first time I

had health effects. It was the first time I had really been that close, even though it was a hack and squirt, I was closer than, you know, helicopter spraying. Because I'm sitting on a mountain top over here and watching them spray over here. But anyway we found imazapyr in their drinking water and made a whole hubbub about it and I don't know if it was DEQ or who it was, but they came out and had their own tests done, because of course they don't trust ours, and found imazapyr in it, but of course, it was below the safe level, so it's okay for your kindergartener to go to school five days a week and drink that water till you graduate high school. That is preposterous. I would never let my child do that.

**I:** So who was or did you have to fight to get the testing done? How did the process go about getting them to test the water and the fish?

**EK:** Well that was us, it was a citizen effort. Together we bought the equipment, they're called POCIS, that's an acronym for: Polar Organic Chemical Integrative Sampler. We bought the equipment, and like I said we had help with a DEQ, on her own time, and then she retired. We wrote up all the reports, we did it by the book, in fact our results were submitted to the investigation and accepted for the investigation, so they are all legit. And it was just a citizen effort. We deployed them, we filmed it all, a month later we took them all out, sent them to the lab, I mean, it's all very by the book so that it would stand up. We also took air tests, again, citizen effort. Went out and bought the equipment, had someone who knows how to run them teach us how to do it, we filmed everything, so that everything's on record, so you can see we did everything, we had our coolers, we had our gloves, by the book. Some of our air results were also submitted to the investigation, so they're all legit.

**I:** So it was a community effort?

**EK:** Yes, a very small community effort. (laughs)

**I:** So I know that you are involved with the Community Rights for Lane County. Can you tell us more about that?

**EK:** Yes I am part of the group. So I was introduced to Community Rights, I can't even remember when, 2011 maybe, made a huge impact on me. Because I was slowly learning that, I mean for 5 years I had been going to the Board of Forestry, and pleaded with them change something, we are being affected, the salmon are being affected, I was slowly realizing, we have no rights out here. I mean, we can't tell them no, because it's already permitted. The system permits all this harm, so we can't come in and say no, they're like, "no, it's already allowed." So, Community Rights spoke to that, they spoke to the fact that we need to get to the underlying issue. Sure, pesticides is an issue, GMOs is an issue, the pipeline is an issue, but the underlying issue that affects it all are our rights. Corporations have the right to do all of that. It's already permitted, and so Community Rights started working on that core issue of we need to stand up as a community and have more rights, more say in what's going on in our community than the out-of-state corporation. That's what

really hit me, and I knew this is it. I had gone down the regulatory road, I had worked with environmental organizations for over five years, and nothing was working. I was keeping things on the agenda, but all they were doing was watching the powerpoints about whose responsibility it is for who. They never talked about fixing the problem or making it better in any way, maybe a little bit more regulation, you know, maybe a little less poison is allowed, but we want to say no, these communities want to say no. We don't want to be sprayed, and we need to work on getting to that point.

**I:** So what is your overall vision of change? Is it wider buffer zones, no spray?

**EK:** Buffer zones are crap, I'll say that right now. Any legislation trying to bring back buffer zones is crap (laughs). I'm sorry, the pesticides that correlate to our exposure that was documented have been found four miles away. A two-hundred foot, a four mile buffer zone is going to do nothing. We need to just end the sprays. There are countless of examples of operations not spraying that do just fine. Their trees are healthy, their trees are stronger, their wood is better! It can be done. We need to stand up and shed light on the horrible practices that Oregon Timber is. They have free reign over our counties, over our communities, and it's all for profit. We're sending that wood out of Oregon, out of the United States even! It's, you know, if we're going to cut down trees, lets keep it here, lets keep the jobs here. If we stopped spraying we would create more jobs, hands down.

**I:** So what keeps you motivated? What pushes you to keep trying for this?

**EK:** My kids. I'm going to try not to get all...Because Tuesday night, Audrey Moore, who created Freedom from Pesticides Alliance, passed away. She was a big inspiration to me. Sorry (crying). She was a fighter. Her ordinance, part of the Community Rights movement is creating local ordinances as a tool to shed light on how we have no rights. Her ordinance down in Josephine County would have banned all pesticide, all pesticide spraying, county, state, schools, ODOT, everything. Which is what needs to happen. The ordinance didn't pass because of the lies, it's, I mean, amazing how corporations can lie and just put it out there and not get in trouble. It was crazy. She was my inspiration, a lot of it. Fiery, if i was feeling down, I could call her, she would get me riled up again and we would do it. But I would have to say my children, for sure. Nature, my animals, if we don't have nature, then we can't live. I mean there is no commerce if there is no nature. We depend on nature for everything. Once everybody realized that, maybe they'll start protecting it a little better.

**I:** What about advice? For young people, people that have been affected, people that want to become involved in the issue and help out?

**EK:** Oh golly! Haha. Advice. I am always constantly trying to point things out to my children, not the bad things, but the good things, so they really learn to love it. Because if you love it more you want to protect it more. I think it's fantastic that groups are starting to target teens more. Civil Liberties Defense Center, they're throwing that Climate Justice for Action Camp

for kids and, my kid's totally going, (laughs). Because it's them we're fighting for. We're leaving a jacked up world for them, haha. I mean, yeah, I don't know. Kids these days are so distracted by technology, we really need to bring the focus back to nature with the kids, I feel, because they are so disconnected, they don't understand what's going on. They can read about it in their media, but it doesn't affect them that way. You know, taking them out there to where the oil spill is, to where the clearcuts are, that's more effective. Getting them out there and getting them away from all that technology- as my kids sit behind the computer and play their games (laughs). My advice is to stay strong, shed light on the problem, tell your story; stories are effective and I don't think enough of the right stories are told.

**I:** Did you ever see yourself becoming an advocate or activist?

**EK:** God no haha. No, not at all. In fact, I had dreadlocks, and then I got into the whole activism thing and started going to Board of Forestry and DEQ meetings and I was like, they don't take you seriously with dreadlocks! And I cut them off, I did, I brushed them out because, dammit, my kids are more important than what my hair looks like. I need you all to listen to me, I am a real person, so then once I cut my dreadlocks off, people had to look at me and be like, oh, she's a normal person, now I have to, you know, actually talk to this person because there's nothing.... But it was interesting, I got farther once I cut the dreadlocks off. I started having meetings with board members and cops stopped showing up, yeah.

**I:** Is there anything else that you would like to talk about that we didn't touch on?

**EK:** I'll probably think of it later, (laughs).

### Further questions

**I:** What is your name and how would you describe yourself?

**EK:** So, my name is Eron King, I live out in Triangle Lake, I am a stay-at-home mom who homeschools her children, works on her small farm with her animals...and then I forgot what else (laughs).

**I:** How are you involved in the pesticide issue?

**EK:** Okay. So I became involved with the pesticide issue in 2008 when Seneca Jones aerial sprayed a plot that we could see from our house. From there, I started going to meetings, mostly the Board of Forestry, thinking if it involves forestry, you would go to the Board of Forestry. One time one of the members did ask me though, "why are you coming here?" (laughs), tells you how much help they were. I also worked a lot with environmental groups with this issue, to no avail, nothing ever worked. I worked five or six years and that when I came and saw the Community Rights movement, was introduced to that. And saw how it

worked at fixing the root of the problem. Sure, we can't say no to sprays, and that's because corporations, timber corporations, have the right to spray, they are permitted to spray, so we can't say no. So we need to work on getting more rights than those corporations do. And that's the direction I'm heading now. Just trying to shed light on that issue. We are creating local ordinances to ban the harms that we don't want in our communities, knowing full well that they will probably go to court, like most of them have here on the west coast, but then the corporations have to come in and say it out loud, "we have more rights than these communities." I think once people hear that out loud, it's a little bit more impactful.

**I:** So what is your vision of change or hope for the future?

**EK:** My hope for the future? My hope for the future would be that aerial spraying of pesticides ends in the forests, actually all spraying of pesticides; roadside. DEQ Toxics monitoring just came out a couple days ago with basin-wide monitoring. They found Diuron, which is a roadside spray, in all samples but one. In all basins they took samples in, but one. That's how bad the roadside spraying is, that's how bad the waters are here. So my vision would be no more pesticides for those reasons. There are alternatives. But definitely forest management needs to change. The way we manage our forests is very lacking, we need to change that.

**I:** And what advice do you have for communities, or for anyone wanting to get involved, or for people that have been affected?

**EK:** My advice would be to get the youth involved, they're slowly starting to become involved with these issues and I think that's really impactful. Work every avenue you can, we need to push at it from all sides. I really, I want it to be clear that I don't think the conventional, environmental groups are doing it right. They are picking at the issue slowly, and it's not working. Going to Salem, it's not working. These officials are elected with money from the corporations, that's how they're getting there, I mean, if they weren't getting these huge donations it would be a lot harder. So they have to bow down to these corporations, of course none of these bills about spraying went through, the timber corporation's too hard, that's what I want to highlight. I am now working on the root of the problem because getting at it the way that the environmental organizations are doing it now is not working, it's just...to me it's just furthering their careers, because if they just chip at it slowly, they have a job. If they were to end what they were trying to end, they would be out of a job. It became so clear to me, once I went to democracy school, the Community Rights movement has these democracy schools, that it became so clear to me how ludicrous it is that we're fighting all these little issues, when really it's this bigger, deeper issue that is the root of the problem. So I have a hard time signing petitions and working with environmental groups anymore, because I can't. Our intentions are different, I want to end it, you want to regulate it more (laughs). It's not going to work, so I guess, my main point would be, we need to change the way we are doing our activism. We've been doing this other activism for, how many years? How many years has the Environmental Protection Agency been around? That's how long. We're doing it wrong,

so. And that's interesting because the EPA [Environmental Protection Act] was formed right around Earth Day.

**Eron After Interview.wav-- going over spray notices**

**EK:** And it doesn't tell you exactly when they are going to spray, see that's a big window...so you got to stand by for four months and then, figure out where they're at.

**EK:** I have investigated because that one was actually sprayed and then it rained. And so, I mean it rained a lot. And their logging operation was a mess. So I called all kinds of people: DEQ, EPA, everybody I could think of to get out here. And so there was actually an investigation started for this particular one. DEQ wrote a horrible report, I mean said it was just scathing, it was a mess up there, they needed to clean it up, but you know, nothing else happened.

**EK:** So if they're going to be within, so close to a river or say a spotted owl area, they have to turn in a written plan of operation. And basically all they have to say is: we're going to follow all the rules, here you go. And that, that's the requirement. Just to say, hey we know that we are going to be this close to the river and we promise we'll follow the rules.