

Mega-dairies cause an enormous, concentrated demand on water resources. They need water for crops to feed the cows and to absorb nitrates from the animal waste. They need drinking water for the cows. They need water for washing barns, running machinery, and otherwise operating the dairy. It adds up to the water demands of a medium-sized city. The proposed Easterday dairy would use about 20 million gallons of water per day (as an annual average) – more water than the City of Bend. The water to irrigate crops would come from the Columbia River, which needs all the water it has left for struggling salmon and steelhead. The rest of the water will probably come from groundwater aquifers, even though groundwater in the area is rapidly declining and several subareas have been designated as “Critical Groundwater Areas.” To make things worse, mega-dairies can exploit a loophole in the law that allows unlimited “stockwatering” without a permit – an exemption created in a time of smaller farms.

Mega-dairies are also major contributors to climate change because the cows and their waste emit large amounts of methane. They also pollute nearby groundwater and surface water if the animal waste is not perfectly managed, drive family farms out of business, and raise animal-welfare concerns such as extreme confinement and excessive production demands.

For all these reasons, DEQ should not be approve construction or operation of additional industrial mega-dairies, or expansion of existing mega-dairies, in Oregon.