Testimony in Support of the Proposed Amendments to Senate Bill 85

Submitted by EVREN Northwest, LLC

EVREN Northwest (ENW), an environmental and geotechnical consulting firm with offices in Portland and Bend, Oregon, recently completed a Preliminary Hydrogeologic Assessment of an approximately 320-acre area in northern Linn County. The study area includes the site of the proposed Evergreen Ranch industrial confined animal feeding operation (CAFO or operation), and the primary purpose of the assessment was to evaluate the potential impact of that operation on existing domestic water supply wells. Based on the results of that work ENW understands the need for and supports the approval of the proposed amendments to Senate Bill 85 (SB 85).

The results of our preliminary assessment identified several facts that clearly demonstrate the need for the proposed legislation. These facts are:

- Ground water, developed by private domestic water supply wells, is the only source of drinking water available to the numerous residents in the area adjacent to and surrounding the proposed CAFO. Ground water is also discharged directly to springs and streams in the project area.
- The hydrogeologic characteristics of the project area are quite complex. Area wells draw water from both a shallow alluvial aquifer and a deeper volcanic bedrock aquifer, and there is little to no detailed information on either aquifer characteristics (including production capabilities). Well data contained in construction reports (well logs) on file with the Oregon Water Resources Department suggest that area well production rates (based only on short term tests conducted by the well driller) are highly variable and range between 1- and 75-gallons per minute (gpm) with none reportedly capable of producing large quantities (> 100-gpm).
- Four test wells recently completed on the site of the proposed CAFO draw water from the same two aquifers as the neighboring domestic water supply wells.
- During the construction of at least one of the CAFO production wells, water being produced by a domestic well on a neighboring property became very turbid. This resulted in damage to several plumbing fixtures in the home and the need to treat the affected well with chlorine and temporarily avoid using the well water.
- A production rate of 5- to 10-gpm is typically adequate to support the domestic water supply needs for a single-family residence. ENW was unable to readily obtain any detailed information on the exact nature of the CAFO proposed for the Evergreen Ranch site. Without that information it is not possible to accurately determine the amount of water needed to support the operation.
- A limited review of on-line sources suggests that a reliable source of continuously available, high-quality water will be needed just to provide drinking water for the chickens and cool the large buildings that house the operation. Because of the critical nature of the water supply, many poultry companies require that two independent supply sources be available.

- The amount of water needed depends on the size of the facility; however, is anticipated that at least 100- to 300-gpm will be needed for the proposed Evergreen Ranch operation.

Given the relatively low production capability of the area aquifers and the complexity and heterogeneous nature of the bedrock aquifer, and anecdotal information, it is likely that large withdrawals of ground water for extended periods of time will stress the natural system. To accurately predict the impact of any CAFO on its surrounding environment it is necessary to have detailed knowledge concerning facility operations as well as additional data to characterize the properties of the aquifers from which water will be withdrawn. It is also necessary to understand the natural resources in the proposed project area and how those resources are used and valued by area residents. Individual residents do not typically have the technical or financial resources to generate this type of information. Adoption of the proposed amendments to SB 85 will go a long way toward ensuring that the information necessary for making sound land use decisions would be available for review and debate. Such review and vigorous debate are necessary for protecting Oregon's natural resources and the public's interest in those resources.

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