



To: Senate Committee on Natural Resources

From: Julia DeGraw, Oregon Conservation Network, and Oregon League of Conservation Voters

Date: 3/14/2023

RE: SUPPORT of SB 85, Factory Farm Moratorium

Dear Chair Golden, Vice Girod, and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to offer input on SB 85-1. On behalf of our thousands of members and supporters in Oregon, we would like to register the Oregon League of Conservation Voters, and the Oregon Conservation Network's strong support to pass SB 85-1, the Factory Farm Moratorium Bill. SB 85-1 is one of OCN's 2023 Priorities for a Healthy Oregon.

The Oregon Conservation Network (OCN) is coordinated through the Oregon League of Conservation Voters (OLCV). OCN is a coalition of 42 not-for-profit organizations throughout the state, united to advocate for pro-conservation legislation and to fight policies that threaten our state's natural legacy. OCN is powered by tens of thousands of Oregonians who belong to their membership organizations. We work to promote policies that will ensure a better Oregon for our children – and to fight policies that do not.

The OLCV and OCN enthusiastically urge your support on SB 85-1, the Factory Farm Moratorium Bill. A moratorium on new and expanded factory farms as proposed in SB 85-1 would allow Oregon time to put policies in place that address the industry's many harmful impacts.

Factory farms are not simply larger farms. They are industrial facilities using industrial practices, and generating industrial-scale pollution. Oregon's one-size-fits-all approach to regulation tilts the scales in favor of these operations, with weak or nonexistent regulations that can strain a family farm while serving as just a cost of doing business to the largest facilities. We need stronger and more equitable regulations that focus on holding the factory farm industry accountable. But to get there, we need a pause, a moratorium, on the permitting of the largest new and expanding operations.

Since the Threemile Canyon mega-dairy, one of the largest in the country, was constructed in the late 1990's, the number of independent dairy farms in Oregon has plummeted. In the eight years after its construction, 600 small dairy farms went out of business. While the industry has concentrated dairy cows in fewer and fewer mega-dairies. With that concentration comes a massive amount of waste—6.5 billion pounds in 2019 alone, more than twice the amount of human waste produced in the Portland-metro area.

All that waste has to go somewhere. The current practice is to spread it on fields, often in quantities far exceeding crops' ability to absorb the huge amounts of nitrogen and phosphorus. The excess leaches into the groundwater where it poisons nearby drinking water wells, and runs off into our streams and rivers.

We also cannot ignore the fact that the harms caused by factory farms do not fall equally on all Oregonians. These facilities disproportionately impact Black, Brown and Indigenous Oregonians. The communities near the state's biggest factory farms are primarily home to Latinx residents burdened with contaminated well water and poisoned air. Our communities should not suffer these kinds of harm for private profit.

The State of Oregon already knows the clear and present danger that factory farms pose. The permitting, pollution, and subsequent closure of the Lost Valley mega-dairy was not an isolated incident. Rather, it is symptomatic of the greater problem: Oregon's weak regulations and practice of rubber-stamping factory farm permits makes it entirely too easy for these disasters to occur. The Lost Valley mega-dairy debacle cost Oregon taxpayers at least \$326,000. These funds were spent enforcing the bare minimum of environmental compliance and then, once it was clear that Lost Valley Farm needed to cease operations, in shutting the facility down.

Lost Valley was a warning -- if we continue to permit these facilities, it will be the tax-paying citizens of Oregon who are left holding the bag. Instead of heeding this warning, the ODA and DEQ are still considering approving the Easterday dairy at the exact same site. DEQ and ODA suggested they couldn't say "no" to Easterday's Oregon mega-dairy application, despite the existing groundwater contamination in the area and the legal and financial issues surrounding the Easterdays, which have clear bearing on the company's ability to run a compliant facility. The agencies still have not denied the Easterday permit, showing our regulations are clearly insufficient to protect our water and rural communities.

The risk of more factory farms in Oregon is significant, as we are now seeing mega-chicken facilities try to move into the state. As legislators consider SB 85-1, there are three proposed mega-chicken facilities being proposed for the state. Two of these would be Foster Farms facilities which would continue to increase consolidation and drive local farmers out of business. One of these facilities is located ½ mile from a rural school, further demonstrating the harms these facilities can cause to rural communities.

We are at a crossroads in Oregon agriculture. We urgently need a moratorium on factory farms so the state can enact policies to protect our air, water, climate, family farms, and special places. We cannot let Oregon become the next hotspot for factory farms.



OLCV is a member of the Stand Up to Factory Farm Coalition and shares their concerns about the damage caused by large factory farming to the air, water quality and quantity, to family and mid-sized farmers, and to the climate. Collectively our coalitions envision an Oregon with a vibrant network of independent farms, thriving rural communities, healthy rivers and streams, and clean air. A moratorium on factory farms would help us get there. On behalf of the OLCV and the OCN coalition, and the thousands of Oregonians we represent, we urge you to stop the spread of these dangerous factory farms and give regulators the opportunity to strengthen protections from their harmful impacts by enacting a factory farm moratorium for Oregon.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Julia B. DeGraw".

Julia B. DeGraw

Coalition Director

Oregon Conservation Network, and Oregon League of Conservation Voters

Testimony Submitted On behalf of all the OCN Member Organizations:

1000 Friends of Oregon, Association of Oregon Recyclers, Audubon Society of Portland, Beyond Toxics, Cascadia Wildlands, Center for Biological Diversity, Center for Food Safety, Central Oregon LandWatch, Climate Solutions, Defenders of Wildlife, Deschutes River Alliance, Engineers for a Sustainable Future, The Environmental Center, Environment Oregon, Food & Water Watch, Friends of Mount Hood, Friends of the Columbia Gorge, Friends of Family Farmers, Greater Hells Canyon Council, League of Women Voters of Oregon, Native Fish Society, Neighbors for Clean Air, Oceana, Oregon Coast Alliance, Oregon Environmental Council, Oregon Land and Water Alliance, Oregon League of Conservation Voters, Oregon Natural Desert Association, Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility, Oregon Shores Conservation Coalition, Oregon Wild, Pew Charitable Trusts, Renewable Northwest, Rogue Riverkeeper, Sierra Club Oregon Chapter, The Street Trust, Surfrider Foundation, Trout Unlimited, Tualatin Riverkeepers, WaterWatch of Oregon, The Wetlands Conservancy, Wild Salmon Center, Zero Coalition