



Factory Farms and Impacts to Threatened and Endangered Species

The proliferation of industrial factory farms in Oregon has resulted in dangerous air and water pollution, overconsumption of scarce water supplies, exploitation of workers, loss of family farms, and harms to animal welfare, as well as endangered and threatened species and their habitats.

Factory farms – or concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) – hold thousands of animals in extremely close confinement, along with their polluting waste. These facilities release harmful levels of greenhouse gases that worsen the climate crisis. They contaminate Oregon’s air, water and land with chemicals, heavy metals, nutrients, pathogens, pharmaceuticals and ammonia. Factory farms also siphon excessive amounts of water from rivers and underground aquifers and threaten to drain and pollute Oregon’s precious water resources.

Endangered and threatened species – and the habitats they depend on for survival – are also at risk from the effects of factory farms. Many of Oregon’s most imperiled fish species rely on freshwater habitat near the state’s largest factory farms.

Pollution from factory farms impairs waterways that are designated critical habitat for numerous federally protected species, including coho salmon, Chinook salmon, steelhead, and bull trout. Surface water contamination by factory farms causes the build up of nitrates, animal waste pollutants such as pharmaceuticals, and other nutrients in rivers, lakes and wetlands, leading to harmful algal blooms and oxygen depletion that can kill aquatic life. The significant withdrawals of fresh water required to sustain these large-scale industrial farm operations reduces water flow in rivers and draws down aquifers that feed important wetlands, further pushing native species and their critical habitats to the brink.

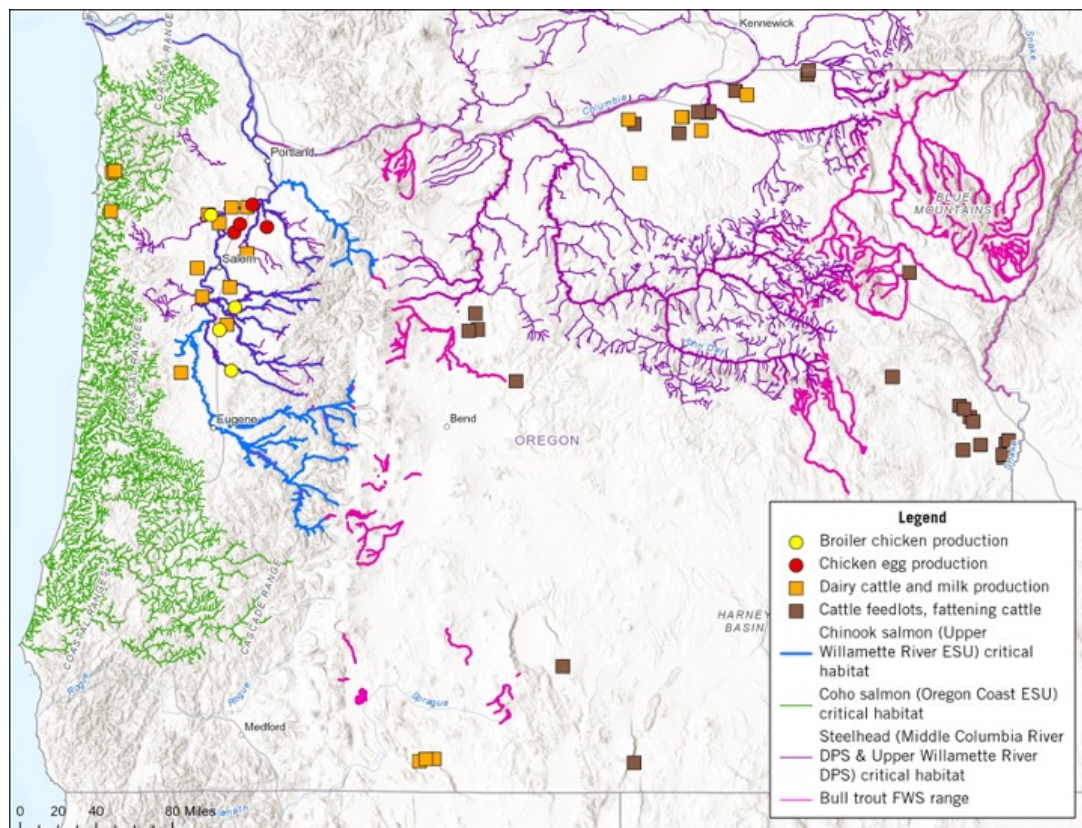


Figure 1. Designated critical habitats for several federally-listed endangered and threatened species in Oregon overlaid with the locations of existing industrial CAFOs. All industrial CAFOs included on this map meet or exceed the size thresholds included in SB 85-1 (2023). (Map by Kara Clauser, Center for Biological Diversity.)

Factory farms threaten the continued survival of some of Oregon's most vulnerable and iconic species – a threat that will be compounded if the construction of factory farms continues.

Wilsonview Dairy – Tillamook, Oregon

Wilsonview Dairy is a factory farm located in a special flood hazard area on the banks of the Wilson River in Tillamook, Oregon. The Wilson River is the largest of the five rivers that flow into Tillamook Bay. It is designated as critical habitat for Oregon Coast coho salmon, a threatened species protected under the federal Endangered Species Act. The river also supports many other salmonids, including spring and fall Chinook salmon, summer and winter steelhead, chum salmon, and coastal cutthroat trout. Chinook salmon are also critical to ensuring the survival of federally listed endangered Southern Resident orcas, which depend on Chinook salmon as their primary food source. Wilsonview Dairy produces large quantities of manure, which contain nitrogen and phosphorus. When manure reaches a waterway, it causes algal blooms that suck the oxygen out of the water, leading to illness and death in fish and creating dead zones. Despite the risks that it poses to this sensitive and critical habitat – Wilsonview Dairy is currently attempting to expand to become one of the ten largest dairies in Tillamook County.

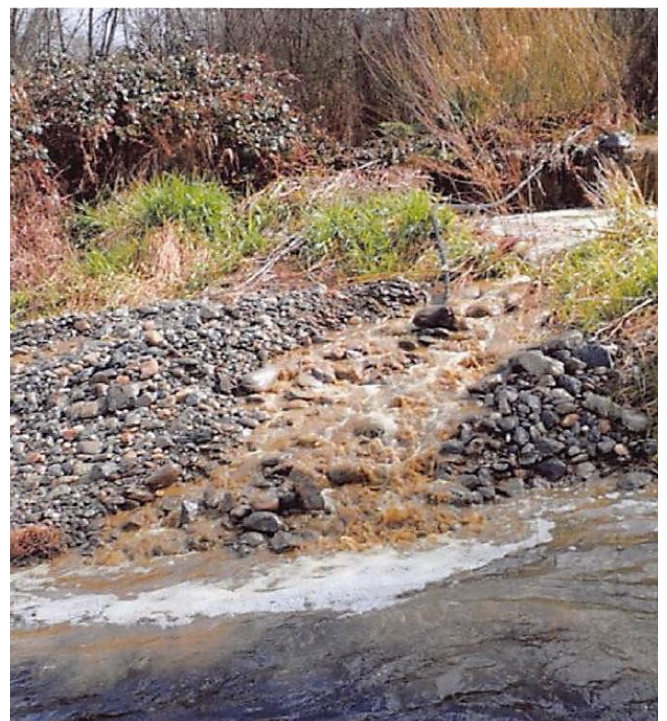


Proposed Foster Farms Contract Factory Farm – J-S Ranch – Scio, Oregon

J-S Ranch is a proposed chicken factory farm that would be located on the banks of the North Santiam River in Scio, Oregon, and would confine 3.4 million chickens each year. The Santiam River is home to endangered and threatened species, including spring Chinook salmon and winter steelhead. The community is strongly opposed to this proposed factory farm. A recent study revealed that large chicken factory farms deposit significant ammonia, which contains nitrogen, onto land and into waterways. Ammonia and nitrogen pollution fuel algal blooms that rob the water of oxygen, cause dead zones, and sicken or kill aquatic life. Unfortunately, ODA ignored the community's concerns and issued a permit for the proposed factory farm in May 2022.

Noble Dairy – Grants Pass, Oregon

Noble Dairy is a large factory farm sited in a special flood hazard area on the banks of the Applegate River in Grants Pass, Oregon. The Applegate River is home to steelhead, rainbow, cutthroat, and brook trout, and its watershed is home to the endangered Siskiyou Mountains salamander. The Applegate River is also a major tributary of the Rogue River, which is home to threatened coho salmon. ODA has allowed Noble Dairy to continue storing and spreading millions of gallons of manure in this sensitive location, even though it has repeatedly violated its permit by exceeding the number of cows it is permitted to confine and discharging significant amounts of manure into waterways. In 2019, Noble Dairy discharged manure to the Applegate River and one of its tributaries, Caris Creek, creating islands of solid manure. Community members complained to ODA and other state agencies that the Applegate River was so polluted with manure that visibility was severely reduced below Noble Dairy and the river had an odor. Testing confirmed that water quality in the Applegate River was severely compromised, with elevated levels of *e.Coli* that exceeded state water quality standards.



Manure discharged from Noble Dairy flowing from Caris Creek into the Applegate River.