

*Chair Senator Golden, Vice-Chair Senator Nash, and Members of the Committee:*

I strongly urge you to support SB 80 and prohibit new and expanded Confined Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) in Oregon's Groundwater Management Areas.

As you know, several areas in Oregon have been designated as Groundwater Management Areas (GWMAs) due to existing high levels of nitrate concentrations in groundwater.

Nitrates from manure and wastewater that travel through soil into the groundwater have been determined to be among primary sources of excessive nitrate pollution. Runoff from land application of manure, leaching from manure that has been improperly spread on land, or leaks or breaks in storage or containment units--all of which can happen with CAFOs--add to groundwater polluted by nitrates. Groundwater polluted by nitrates can seep into our rivers, streams, wetlands, lakes, and ocean waters—threatening fish, wildlife, and other living organisms and plants. Multiple studies have shown that CAFOs are a contributor to groundwater nitrate pollution.

There is no dispute that nitrates cause significant health issues. Groundwater contaminated by nitrates seeps into wells and threatens the health of those who drink water from these. Well tests in GWMAs have shown nitrate levels as high as 11 times the limit for safe consumption and have rendered wells unusable.

Although not in a GWMA, a new CAFO was recently approved in Linn County by the Oregon Department of Agriculture despite testimony from adjoining landowners that the CAFO location was subject to flooding from a nearby river. Flood waters that cover CAFOs add nitrates to groundwater and to our rivers and streams. Additionally, even despite Oregon's designation of GWMAs, regulatory agencies have in the past approved several permits allowing the creation and expansion of large CAFOs in these regions. CAFOs that were approved in GWMAs have resulted in multiple environmental violations. While this bill would not result in any changes to these existing facilities, it would stop our regulatory agencies from issuing any future large CAFO permits in GWMAs until the groundwater crisis is addressed.

We can no longer rely on intervention from the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to address this crisis. Our state elected officials and regulatory agencies need to do more to prevent pollution from contaminating our drinking water and environment. Please prevent further degradation of our communities, our environments, and the health of those who live in GWMAs.

I strongly urge you to support and do all you can to assure passage of SB 80.