

Submitter: Suzannah Smith  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Senate Committee On Natural Resources and  
Wildfire  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB80

04/02/2025

To: Senate Natural Resources Committee

From: Suzannah Smith

Re: Support for SB 80- to stop new or expanding large CAFOs in GWMA

Dear Chair Golden, and Members of the Senate Natural Resources Committee,

My name is Suzannah Smith, and I go to Lewis & Clark Law School. I urge you to please pass SB 80. Nitrate in groundwater can be deadly, and some areas of Oregon (specifically the Lower Umatilla Basin Groundwater Management Area) have been denied access to clean drinking water for decades. This area is also home to much of Oregon's Latina community, highlighting the stark environmental justice concerns this nitrate pollution poses.

I come from a family of family farmers, and I have directly seen the impact of the government's support of industrial agriculture instead of the families and communities that make up the heart of our food system. Within their generation, my grandparents' community has gone from a thriving farming community to largely empty as their children and grandchildren have sold out and moved away from their farms because the government has ensured that only the largest corporations can afford to stay in business.

I beg you to please ensure that Oregon will put people over profit and not allow groundwater to be further polluted by the largest CAFOs. We can no longer rely on federal protection, and our state leaders must act. Despite the Lower Umatilla Basin's designation as a GWMA since 1990, regulatory agencies have continued to permit and expand massive CAFOs, including Oregon's largest mega-dairy and beef feedlot, which together house over 160,000 cows. While SB 80 would not affect existing facilities, it would halt future large CAFO permits until the groundwater crisis is addressed.

Regulatory failures, such as the approval of Lost Valley Mega-Dairy in 2017—despite widespread public health and environmental concerns—underscore the need for stronger protections. As expected, Lost Valley amassed over 200 environmental violations, exacerbating the crisis. More recently, Governor Kotek's Executive Order, allowing the Port of Morrow to violate its wastewater permit without consequence, demonstrates how existing regulations fail to hold polluters accountable. We must

prevent additional sources of contamination from moving into GWMA's before more damage is done. This is a common-sense bill to prevent the worsening of an already severe public health crisis.

I urge you to take decisive action by passing SB 80 to protect Oregon's communities and drinking water.

Sincerely,  
Suzannah Smith