

Submitter: Valeria Picazo

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Natural Resources and  
Wildfire

Measure, Appointment or  
Topic: SB80

To: Senate Natural Resources Committee

From: Valeria Picazo

Re: Testimony in Support of SB 80 - Halting New or Expanding Large CAFOs in  
GWMAs

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

My name is Valeria Picazo. I am a veterinarian with experience working with farmed animals, and I am currently pursuing a Master's degree in Animal Law at Lewis & Clark Law School. I am writing today to urge your strong support for SB 80, a necessary measure to pause the permitting of new or expanding large Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) within Oregon's designated Groundwater Management Areas (GWMAs) until existing contamination issues are adequately addressed.

My background in veterinary medicine and animal husbandry provides me with a firsthand understanding of the realities of intensive animal agriculture. While efficient production is often the goal, large CAFOs inherently involve high concentrations of animals, which leads to massive amounts of waste. The management of this manure is directly linked to the severe nitrate pollution crisis plaguing Oregon's GWMAs. Nitrate levels in some areas drastically exceed safe drinking water limits set by the EPA, posing significant public health risks, including an increased risk of certain cancers (like stomach cancer) and congenital disabilities. When nitrates are converted to nitrites, they can react with amines and amides through nitrosation, forming N-nitroso compounds, which are recognized also as carcinogenic to animals. As a veterinarian, I am aware of the biological processes that lead to nutrient concentration in waste and the challenges of preventing environmental contamination on such a large scale.

Furthermore, during my time in law school I have deepened my understanding of the regulatory landscape. It is clear that current regulations have proven insufficient to prevent environmental degradation and protect public health in these sensitive areas. Despite the designation of GWMAs decades ago, pollution persists and, in some cases, worsens, often due to the proliferation of large industrial animal farming facilities. SB 80 represents a crucial, warranted step to prevent exacerbating this problem by adding new large-scale pollution sources while the state works to mitigate existing contamination.

This issue is also critically linked to environmental justice. Oregon's largest CAFOs are often located in rural, low-income, and Latinx communities, who disproportionately bear the burden of contaminated drinking water and polluted air. Approving more large facilities in these areas, before fixing the existing problems, would perpetuate this injustice. This pause is vital, especially with the current landscape our environment faces.

Moreover, the expansion of industrial-scale animal operations often comes at the expense of smaller, family-owned farms, which may employ more environmentally sustainable and higher-welfare practices. Supporting SB 80 can help level the playing field for these smaller farms that present a more just food system. Also, the conditions often prevalent in large CAFOs can present significant animal welfare challenges compared to less intensive farming models.

Oregon prides itself on its environmental values, commitment to healthy communities, and its legislative recognition of animal sentience. Passing SB 80 aligns with these ideals. It is a proactive measure to protect our vital water resources, safeguard public health, address environmental inequities, and prevent further harm from unsustainable industrial agricultural practices.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I strongly urge you to vote in favor of SB 80.

Sincerely,

Valeria Picazo