

To: Senate Natural Resources Committee
From: Mei Brunson
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 Mei Brunson, and I live in Portland, OR. I am writing to you today in support of SB 80. We must take action to halt the expansion of factory farming, defined by the Oregon Department of Agriculture as large CAFOs, in our state's groundwater management areas until contamination is brought down to safe levels.

Every Oregonian has a right to safe drinking water, and it is unjust that many of those in Oregon's GWMA haven't had access to clean drinking water in over three decades due to pervasive factory farm nitrate pollution. Nitrate from fertilizers and manure pollutes groundwater and threatens the health of those who drink it.

Nitrate contamination in the Lower Umatilla Basin GWMA continues to worsen in spite being designated a GWMA 35 years ago. This can be attributed in part to the proliferation of large CAFOs in this GWMA. Despite its designation as a GWMA in 1990, regulatory agencies approved several permits allowing the creation and expansion of large CAFOs in the region. These include two which have ballooned into Oregon's largest mega-dairy and beef feedlot, collectively permitted to confine over 160,000 cows. ODA also persisted in its approval for permitting the disastrous Lost Valley Mega-Dairy, a large tier 2 CAFO, in 2017. As expected, Lost Valley eventually racked up over 200 environmental violations furthering the groundwater crisis in the Lower Umatilla Basin.

We need mandatory reductions in pollution and to prevent new sources of pollution, including factory farms, from being built in GWMA in the first place. Well tests in GWMA show nitrate levels more than 11 times the EPA limit for safe consumption. Drinking nitrate-laden water can cause severe health problems, particularly in women and infants, such as certain types of cancers, blue baby syndrome, thyroid issues, and other adverse health effects. Factory farms threatened the health of its surrounding communities in countless other ways, too. For example, large quantities of pollution concentrated on factory farms release airborne particulate matter linked to asthma, bronchitis and other respiratory diseases — nationwide, factory farm air pollution is responsible for [more than 12,000 premature deaths every year](#). Factory farms are an [environmental justice issue](#). Many of Oregon's largest dairy factory farms lie in rural Latinx communities, and these communities disproportionately suffer the adverse health impacts of these facilities.

While this bill would not result in any changes to existing factory farms in GWMA, it would stop ODA from issuing any future large CAFO permits until the groundwater crisis is addressed. Preventing any new or expanding large CAFO would prevent new sources of pollution in GWMA which would give state regulatory agencies the time they need to respond to existing sources of pollution. I urge our state elected officials to do more to prevent pollution from contaminating of too many Oregonians' drinking water. We need to prevent additional sources of pollution from moving into GWMA in the first place, and SB 80 would accomplish just this.

Thank you,
Mei Brunson