Protect Oregon's Air Quality and Family Farms
Support SB 197/HB 3308

Family farms and air quality are at risk as Oregon provides pollution loophole for the largest Confined Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs)

Air Pollution from Large CAFOs - A Longstanding Problem

In 2007, the Oregon Legislature created a multi-stakeholder Dairy Air Quality Task Force to find solutions to address growing air quality problems associated with large industrial dairy operations in Oregon. Gases like ammonia (a source of haze and acidification) and methane (a powerful climate change contributor) can be release in huge quantities from large manure lagoons and when large numbers of dairy cows are concentrated in a small area.

A 2008 report from this Task Force called for **a new air quality program to reduce harmful air emissions from significant sources of dairy-related air pollution**. The program included air quality monitoring, research, voluntary steps, and beginning in 2015, regulation for large sources of pollution. The consensus proposal, called an 'optimal balance' by the Task Force, was endorsed by the dairy industry, family farm organizations, and environmental and public health professionals. But it was was never created.

Now, Oregon faces a growing threat as new industrial scale operations move here to take advantage of our lax oversight of air pollution.

New Threats and Lax Oversight Put Oregon At Risk

Oregon is already home to the nation's largest industrial dairy operation, which is likely the state's largest single source of agricultural air pollution. Threemile Canyon Farms, at 70,000 cows, is Oregon's biggest source of ammonia emissions, and a major source of methane, a potent greenhouse gas. It has been directly linked to acid precipitation in the Columbia River Gorge by federal agencies. Air pollution from Threemile Canyon Farms, owned by North Dakota based RD Offutt, has been a long-standing issue since the operation started in the early 2000s.

Now, Oregon is facing a new 30,000 head industrial dairy operation located nearby that could worsen air quality in the region. If approved, the proposed 'Lost Valley Ranch' would generate 187 million tons of manure each year, similar to a large Oregon city, but without wastewater treatment. Instead, liquid manure would be stored in open-air lagoons and spread on thousands of acres with no requirements to reduce emissions, posing a significant new risk to air quality in the region.

Because Oregon has no program to monitor and protect air quality from these large sources, the combined impact of Lost Valley Ranch, Threemile and future operations that move here to take advantage of our lax air quality rules is likely to be significant and growing.

Protect Small and Mid-Sized Farms

According to state economists, Oregon has been losing small and mid-sized dairy farms as larger and larger operations take over the industry. The state has lost roughly 75% of its dairy farms since 2002, when the first 'mega' dairy arrived here. **Oregon's failure to regulate air pollution from the largest operations has created an un-level playing field for smaller farms.**

The state should protect smaller and mid-sized dairy farms, and encourage voluntary measures to protect air quality. But it also needs to stop giving factory-scale operations, which are often owned by out-of-state companies, a free pass to pollute.

The Legislature Must Act Pass SB 197/HB 3308

These bills would require the establishment of an Oregon Dairy Air Emissions Program by 2019 based on the consensus proposal of Oregon's Dairy Air Quality Task Force in 2008.

This would include air quality monitoring, support for smaller and mid-sized farms to take voluntary steps to improve practices, and regulation of new, large sources to reduce or prevent emissions.

With the growing threat Oregon faces from the expansion of large industrial dairies in the state, the need for a program to protect air quality and prevent pollution from large operations - while protecting small and mid-sized dairy farms - has become critical.

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