



Friends of Toppenish Creek



Governor Jay Inslee  
Cc: Rob Duff, Senior Policy Advisor  
Office of the Governor  
PO Box 40002  
Olympia, WA 98504-0002

September 21, 2016

Dear Governor Inslee,

We are a broad coalition of environmental, health care, and racial justice organizations and write to express deep concerns with your Department of Ecology's (Ecology) current draft of the

Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO) discharge permit. **We fear that this weak permit will undermine your administration's commitment to defending the environment and public health.**

As you know, the goal of the permit is to protect the state's ground and surface waters from manure pollution at animal facilities. This permit fails to protect Washington State's natural resources and its highly impacted communities from agricultural pollution. It disregards the findings of its own scientists articulated in previous drafts of the permit and in research intended to inform the permit design. It foregoes critical accountability, transparency, monitoring, and enforcement mechanisms in favor of industry interests and puts agricultural communities and shellfish in the Puget Sound at undue risk of nitrate poisoning. **We respectfully ask you to work with Ecology to improve the draft permit so that it achieves its intended goals by including three key improvements:**

- 1. Replace this unacceptably weak permit with a comprehensive combined state-NPDES permit issued under the Clean Water Act,**
- 2. Require groundwater and surface water monitoring, and**
- 3. Replace the current inadequate adaptive management scheme with clear and enforceable limits on pollution, including mandatory implementation of pollution control technologies.**

CAFOs pose a potent public health threat to communities in Washington State that already face significant environmental and socioeconomic burdens. As OneAmerica organizers learned through a community survey in 2015, many residents of the Lower Yakima Valley are unable to drink their water due to unsafe levels of nitrates. Much of the local population is disproportionately impoverished, linguistically isolated, and uninsured; **the area cannot afford a public health threat as potent as manure pollution.** Worse still, the overlapping phenomena of renter-occupied households and homes served by private wells renders residents highly susceptible to drinking water contamination, and positions the Department of Ecology as their first – and perhaps only – line of defense.

In addition to threatening public health, agricultural pollution is one of the leading sources of water pollution in Washington, threatening some of our most treasured natural resources as well as shellfish populations in the Puget Sound. Water quality monitoring data in Whatcom County shows that CAFOs in that area are continuing to over-apply manure to fields in a manner that jeopardizes water quality. The Washington Department of Health, the Washington State Department of Agriculture, other state agencies, and the Lummi Indian Nation have confirmed that manure from industrial dairies contributes to shellfish bed closures plaguing Puget Sound.

Our concerns about this discharge permit also extend to the process by which it was formed. Many of our coalition members opposed legislation that would have directed Ecology to adopt a state-only discharge permit during the 2016 legislative session. Fortunately the democratic process prevailed, and both the House and Senate rejected the legislation. Had either bill passed, we would have advocated for your veto. **We are, therefore, deeply disappointed to see Ecology disregard both the will of the people and best available science.** We find the implicit position that human and environmental health and a prosperous dairy industry are mutually exclusive to be unfounded, and we are committed to working for solutions that support both.

We know that you share our concerns for Washington State waters and the people, animals, and industries that depend on clean water. We therefore ask that you work with Ecology to strengthen the permit and implement a single, comprehensive combined state-NPDES permit that will achieve our shared goal.

Thank you for all that you do to protect the environment and human health.

Sincerely,



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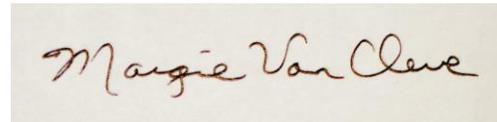
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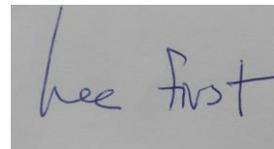
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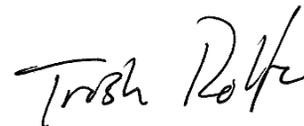
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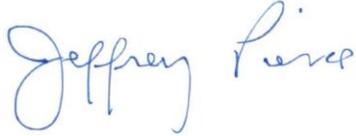


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