

**THE PROGRESSIVE  
Newswire**

A project of Common Dreams

**For Immediate Release**

Wednesday August 17, 2022, 12:59pm EDT

**Food & Water Watch****Contact**Jessica Gable, [jgable@fwwatch.org](mailto:jgable@fwwatch.org)Ubaldo Hernández, [ubaldo@columbiariverkeeper.org](mailto:ubaldo@columbiariverkeeper.org)**PRESS RELEASE**

# Advocates File Petition Demanding the State of Oregon Address Mega-Dairy Air Pollution

Petition calls for immediate action on unregulated CAFO emissions.

**Salem, OR** - Today, 22 organizations filed a petition for rulemaking with the Oregon Environmental Quality Commission, demanding it take immediate action to address the dangerous air pollution emitted by mega-dairies across the state. Led by members of the [Stand Up to Factory Farms coalition](#), petitioners represent a diverse array of environmental, public health, sustainable agriculture, animal welfare and community-based organizations. [Read the petition here.](#)

Large industrial dairy operations that crowd thousands of cows in confined conditions emit vast quantities of air pollution that not only hurt the environment and exacerbate climate change, but also jeopardize the health and well-being of dairy workers, farmed animals, and nearby communities. The State has long been aware of these harmful impacts—in fact, a state-convened task force recommended Oregon take immediate steps to curb dairy air pollution as far back as 2008. Nevertheless, the State has failed to act on those recommendations and mega-dairy emissions remain virtually unregulated. The petition urges the EQC to adopt rules that Oregon’s Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) can implement to finally start holding this polluting industry accountable under state and federal air quality laws by creating a permit program that will rein in mega-dairy air emissions.

The proposed regulatory program would target the staggering amount of climate-altering methane emitted by these facilities, as well as several air pollutants that pose a serious threat to human and environmental health. Recent research from advocacy organization and co-petitioner Food & Water Watch reveals that Oregon’s mega-dairies collectively release over 17 million kilograms of methane every year, equivalent to the emissions of 318,000 cars. They also emit ammonia, hydrogen sulfide and particulate matter, all of which can cause chronic respiratory disease and even death. Nationwide, emissions from industrial livestock operations cause 12,400 deaths every year, killing more people than pollution from coal-fired power plants. These emissions also disproportionately impact vulnerable communities. Over one third of Oregon's dairy cows live in Morrow and Umatilla Counties, which have the state’s highest percentage of Latinx residents.

Once the petition is filed, the EQC has 90 days to formally respond by either denying the groups’ request, or initiating rulemaking proceedings. A public comment period is expected.

**In response to the filing, petitioners issued the following statements:**

“For too long the State has sat idly by while Oregon mega-dairies have been spewing toxic pollution into the air, wreaking havoc on our natural resources, climate, and communities,” said Emily Miller, Staff Attorney at Food & Water Watch and lead author of the petition. “DEQ has a duty to protect us from this polluting industry, yet has chosen to ignore the science and wilfully disregard the

destructive impacts of these operations. This head-in-the-sand approach must change. We hope that the agency seriously considers the regulatory program we've proposed and takes this long-overdue action. "

"Large industrial dairy operations create environmental and social justice crises in the communities where these facilities take root," said Ubaldo Hernández, Senior Community Organizer at Columbia Riverkeeper. "The environment suffers from excessive water use, underground soil, water contamination, and poor air quality, leaving long-lasting environmental damage to the communities around megadairies. Contaminated water, soil, and breathing toxic fumes affect human communities' health and quality of life. These create health problems in low-income communities that do not have access to health care, turning these problems into an economic burden to families that live and work where megadairies operate."

"The environmental damage caused by mega-dairy operations in Oregon is built on the immense suffering of tens of thousands of cows who are confined in unnatural conditions, many never stepping foot on grass for their entire lives." said Adam Mason, Senior Manager of Farm Animal Welfare and Environmental Policy, ASPCA. "It is critical that we hold factory farming corporations accountable for their impacts on the environment, local communities, and animals. Regulation of the air emissions from Oregon mega-dairies is an important step in reining in this destructive and inhumane industry."

"It's time for Oregon to start prioritizing public health and the climate emergency over the self-serving wishes of these industrial-scale polluters," said Hannah Connor, an attorney at the Center for Biological Diversity. "We're asking the state to take commonsense actions to rein in this harmful air pollution. This is about supporting healthy wildlife and ecosystems, and protecting people against greater climate chaos and the many health issues triggered by the nasty fumes emitted day after day by these massive, poorly regulated factory farms."

"Communities near confined animal feeding operations are breathing hazardous gasses like methane, ammonia, and hydrogen sulfide," said Lisa Arkin, Executive Director of Beyond Toxics. "As a result of the pollution, headaches, breathing problems and heart conditions are plaguing low-income and rural communities. These fumes can make lives unbearable and the air unbreathable."

“Industrial animal agriculture’s impacts on the environment, animals — both in facilities and in the wild, and the health of local communities cannot continue to be ignored,” said Stephen Wells, Executive Director at the Animal Legal Defense Fund. “The commitments made by Oregon’s environmental agencies cannot be met — nor the concerns of residents addressed — without meaningful regulation as are identified in the petition.”

###

*Food & Water Watch mobilizes regular people to build political power to move bold and uncompromised solutions to the most pressing food, water, and climate problems of our time. We work to protect people’s health, communities, and democracy from the growing destructive power of the most powerful economic interests.*

 (202) 683-2500

 [www.foodandwaterwatch.org](http://www.foodandwaterwatch.org)



[PRESS PAGE](#)

[ACTION PAGE](#)