



Submitted via email to senr.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov

March 21, 2019

**Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 103
Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources**

Chair Dembrow and Members of the Committee,

The Center for Biological Diversity (Center) submits the following written testimony in support of Senate Bill 103, which would enact a moratorium on the permitting of new and expanding industrial mega-dairy operations in the state of Oregon. For the reasons explained below, the Center respectfully requests that the committee pass Senate Bill 103 out of committee and on to the full Senate with a ‘do pass’ recommendation.

The Center is a national, nonprofit conservation organization with more than 1.4 million members and online activists, including approximately 25,000 member and supporters across Oregon, that is dedicated to the protection of endangered species and wild places. Following that mission, the Center advocates against unsustainable industrial agricultural practices and for sustainable agricultural solutions.

We are testifying today in support of Senate Bill 103 because it will give legislators and regulators a much-needed opportunity to stop and evaluate the public health, economic, animal welfare, and environmental impacts of large industrial dairies in Oregon, and provide Oregon’s communities and natural resources with important statutory protections.

Over the last twenty years, Oregon has experienced a steep rise in large industrial dairy operations, often referred to as “mega-dairies,” with the average size of a large dairy herd in the state nearly doubling between 1997 and 2012, and the number of dairy cows more than tripling during that same time period. These industrial facilities, which concentrate huge numbers of animals and their waste in a small geographic area, generate dangerous amounts of air and water pollution, and can cause considerable harm to groundwater quality and quantity.

The Lost Valley Farm disaster, which is still unfolding outside of Boardman, highlights the problems inherent in these operations, and makes clear that the state’s current approach to regulating industrial dairies is woefully inadequate. Permitted in 2017 to house 30,000 cows, Lost Valley quickly racked up more than 200 environmental violations, including manure pit and mortality storage overflows that threatened the already polluted Lower Umatilla Basin Groundwater Management Area. Photos of cows standing in deep manure at Lost Valley further provided a glimpse into the lives of the animals on this facility and the welfare threats that they

faced. In 2018, the state finally took action to shut Lost Valley down, but another operation already appears ready to take its place if the legislature does not act.

Lost Valley is a stark example of what can go wrong if the state continues to approve mega-dairy operations without first ensuring that it has the necessary regulatory infrastructure in place to protect Oregon's natural resources, wildlife, and public health, and maintain its vibrant family farming community. The Center believes that limiting legislative reforms to the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permitting process, as Senate Bill 876 proposes, will not provide the protections necessary to safeguard Oregon against the harmful effects of this industry because it will leave critical issues, such as air pollution and animal welfare, unaddressed.

The Center, therefore, respectfully requests that the committee pass SB 103 out of committee and on to the full Senate with a 'do pass' recommendation. Thank you for considering our organization's input on this important piece of legislation.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Hannah Connor', written over a horizontal line.

Hannah Connor
Senior Attorney
Center for Biological Diversity