



May 4, 2023

Senate Committee on Rules
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

Re: Friends of the Columbia Gorge's comments on the -4 amendments to SB 85

Dear Chair Lieber and members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment and for all of the work that has been done during this session on the rapidly growing mega-CAFO crisis. Friends of the Columbia Gorge ("Friends") continues to support the -1 amendments to SB 85 and submits the following comments on the -4 amendments to SB 85.

Friends is a non-profit organization with approximately 5,000 members. Friends is dedicated to protecting and enhancing the scenic, cultural, recreation, and natural resources of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area ("National Scenic Area" or "Gorge"). Friends' membership lives, works, and plays in the Columbia River Gorge and is adversely affected by the direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts caused by emissions from industrial CAFOs that affect the National Scenic Area.

Mega-CAFOs already cause negative effects on air quality – something not addressed in the -4s. These negative effects include danger to human health for Gorge communities and visitors, an increase in hazy days, and harm to natural biota of the Gorge.

The Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area is already severely impaired by air pollution, especially particulate pollution. As a result, haze is a major problem in the National Scenic Area which harms its scenic beauty. The Forest Service has documented that over the last 20 years visibility impairment occurs on at least 95% of the days that have been monitored in the National Scenic Area. Mega-CAFOs are major contributors to this ongoing pollution. Because these operations have such an impact on the health and economy of the Gorge, Friends has taken an active role in addressing these issues.

Friends was involved with the 2007 Dairy Air Quality Task Force. That task force came up with common-sense recommendations for establishing best management practices to reduce emissions from mega-dairies. In the years since, the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) has declined to do a rulemaking to effectuate these recommendations and no

further legislation has been passed to address the problems outlined in the task force's findings. Because of this lack of action, we continue to support the position that no more mega-CAFOs should be permitted until this regulatory gulf is filled.

Research shows that Oregon mega-CAFOs are already responsible for damage to the residents, visitors, and the protected resources of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area. Mega-CAFOs emit ammonia, nitrogen oxides, hydrogen sulfide, and particulate matter, all of which can cause chronic respiratory disease and death. Even when the coal-fired power plant in Boardman was shut down for maintenance, air quality issues persisted in the Gorge and “NH3 emissions from the nearby dairy industry [we]re likely a contributing factor.”¹ Simply put, adding more mega-CAFOs without taking into account emissions from the new facilities will make matters worse. That is why it is so important to pass SB 85-1 and press the pause button on more mega-CAFOs until air quality impacts can be taken into account.

Ammonia is also a significant driver of dangerous fine particulate pollution. Dairy workers are exposed to these toxic fumes, while Gorge communities are likely to suffer chronic health impacts from emissions. According to a recent study, livestock emissions are responsible for more deaths in the U.S. than coal plants — largely due to fine particulate matter.² However, DEQ still does not regulate these emissions from mega-CAFOs.

The Oregon Department of Agriculture reports that Oregon mega-CAFOs produced 2.5 million tons of manure in 2018 which is more than the waste produced by the population of the Portland-Vancouver metropolitan area. Furthermore, mega-CAFOs with their massive polluting manure lagoons are rapidly replacing family farms that don't have manure lagoons. Since thresholds for significant adverse impacts have already been exceeded for particulate matter and nitrogen deposition, any significant source of pollutants will likely contribute to cumulative significant adverse impacts to Gorge communities and resources. Recent research indicates that manure digesters actually raise ammonia emissions exacerbating the negative effects on human health in nearby communities.

¹ *Now you see it, now you don't: Impact of temporary closures of a coal-fired power plant on air quality in the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area*, Atmospheric Chemistry and Physics, Jaffe, D.A., p. 8004, (October 23, 2009).

² Particulate matter pollution threatens human health and welfare. When reviewing the National Ambient Air Quality Standards for PM_{2.5}, the EPA found that there is no level of particulate matter pollution at which there are no human health effects. According to the EPA, fine particulate matter pollution causes a variety of adverse health effects, including premature death, heart attacks, strokes, birth defects, and asthma attacks (71 Fed. Reg. 2620, 2627–36 (Jan. 17, 2006)). Even low levels of PM_{2.5} can cause low birth weights, damage lung function, and increase risks of heart attack and premature death. Studies reviewed by the EPA revealed a linear or almost linear relationship between diseases like cancer and the amount of fine particulate matter in the ambient air. Consequently, particulate matter contamination has adverse health effects at any concentration.

Conclusion

Nitrogen oxides are a major component of haze pollution that effects the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area. Sulfur dioxide also contributes to acid rain, which threatens ecosystems and Native American rock images. Ammonia is dangerous to human health and the environment and contributes to regional haze and dangerous particulate pollution. PM2.5 is hazardous to human health and is already a problem in the Gorge. **Friends asks that you pass SB 85-1 and pause the approval of new mega-CAFOs until air quality measures can be put into effect or add air quality provisions in a future set of amendments.**

Sincerely,

Rudy Salakory
Conservation Director

Friends of the Columbia Gorge
123 NE Third Ave., Ste 108
Portland, OR 97232