



1616 P Street, NW  
Suite 300  
Washington, DC 20036  
T +202.683.2500  
F +202.683.2501  
[foodandwaterwatch.org](http://foodandwaterwatch.org)

February 6th, 2025

Senate Committee On Natural Resources and Wildfire  
900 Court St. NE  
Salem, OR 97301

**RE: Food & Water Watch Written Testimony on SB 747**

Chair Golden, Vice-Chair Nash, and members of the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Wildfire:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong support of SB747, which would require agricultural operations with over 200 acres of irrigated land to report the amount of fertilizers they apply to irrigated land. Annual reporting of fertilizer application is a common sense first step in creating transparency around the use of fertilizers, which is necessary to understand its impact on groundwater contamination and inform solutions. This bill is targeted, intentionally focusing on large-scale operations where action to reduce fertilizer over-application would have the biggest benefits to public health. In fact, the bill exempts 90% of Oregon farms from reporting but would cover 80% of irrigated farmland. Claims that the bill is intended to punish farmers, or tell Oregonians how to farm, simply do not hold water.

Many of those who testified in support of this bill are from directly impacted communities who have been experiencing the devastating effects of nitrate-contaminated drinking water. Chronic exposure to elevated levels of nitrates has been linked to a myriad of health issues such as certain types of cancers, reproductive issues, and a condition called blue baby syndrome. In the Lower Umatilla Basin Ground Water Management Area, Oregon's Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) has reported that roughly 69% of the nitrate contaminating groundwater is traced back to irrigated agriculture on nearby large-scale agricultural operations. Despite the well-documented dangers associated with nitrate contamination linked to the overapplication of fertilizers, there is currently no statewide system tracking how much fertilizer is being applied by these large-scale operations, leaving regulators and nearby residents unaware of the extent of this issue. For decades, voluntary state efforts to address nitrate contamination in the LUBGWMA have failed, and just two weeks ago, DEQ published a LUBGWMA groundwater nitrate trend analysis showing an overall increasing nitrate trend and concluding that nitrate leaching into groundwater is likely still occurring. The proposed fertilizer reporting would represent an incredibly modest step towards better understanding, and ultimately addressing, this long-term crisis.

Big Ag lobbyists and other industrial ag proponents have complained that annual reporting of fertilizer application would be a burden to farms. But their resistance to ensuring transparency about their agricultural practices has little to do with administrative headaches and everything to do with avoiding accountability for the contamination of our groundwater. Transparency is an integral first step in addressing the issue of nitrate contamination across our state. Without this reliable data, our regulatory agencies will continue to rely on



ineffective approaches that have already forced impacted communities to bear the burden of polluted groundwater they rely on for drinking for decades. All humans deserve access to clean, safe drinking water and commitments from a state who takes meaningful action to protect them.

We urge you to stand with the residents of Oregon and support SB747 to take action towards protecting our groundwater and our communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Tarah Heinzen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "T" and a long, sweeping underline.

Tarah Heinzen  
Legal Director, Food & Water Watch