



THREEMILE CANYON FARMS, LLC

**TESTIMONY OF MARTY MYERS, GENERAL MANAGER OF
THREEMILE CANYON FARMS**

**TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT
AND NATURAL RESOURCES**

TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO SB 197

MARCH 9, 2017

Chair Dembrow and Members of the Committee

My name is Marty Myers and I am the General Manager of Threemile Canyon Farms. Our farm is located about 150 miles east of Portland, near Boardman Oregon on 93,000 acres originally intended to be a Space Age Industrial Park. Each day, for the past 18 years of our farms' existence we have worked hard to demonstrate that sound business practices and sound environmental practices go hand in hand. It turns out that smart public policies working in cooperation with innovative business plans, a hard-working, culturally diverse workforce and a commitment to sustainable values can create an Oregon success story and bring prosperity to Oregon's rural communities.

So, for 18 years we've put aside political ideology and concentrated on what works best for Oregon families.

- That's why we voluntarily surrendered one-third of our water rights to ensure that local streams and rivers would stay full year 'round.
- That's why we voluntarily placed 23,000 acres into a wildlife-conservation preserve to protect threatened species and invaluable Columbia Basin Grasslands and paid The Nature Conservancy to manage this preserve.
- That's why we invested in a state-of-the-art precision irrigation system, managed by a farm-wide wifi computer system and why we use advanced technology to provide traceability on all our crops and cattle to ensure the quality our customers expect.
- That's why we engineered our dairies in the center of our property, [that's less than 2 animals/acre with adequate buffers] with the closest neighbors 10 miles from the dairy...and built a zero-discharge waste management system.
- That's why we created a "closed-loop" system uniting our farm and dairy operations based on zero-waste principles.
- That's why we decided to help Oregon become a leader in reducing reliance on fossil fuels by investing in innovative renewable energy projects on our farm like wind turbines, a methane digester and a planned solar power array.



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- And that's why I volunteered to serve on the Dairy Air Quality Task Force in 2008 to find an Oregon solution to the knotty dilemma of ensuring growth and prosperity for communities that welcomed modern dairy operations, without sacrificing the values of air quality and public health.

Those 18 years have given me a lot of lessons learned...and so I have come to testify today in opposition to SB 197, because it rejects fundamental Oregon values of cooperative problem solving based on sound scientific evidence and field-tested approaches that work. Instead, SB 197 relies on political ideology and punitive regulatory schemes.

As you know, the Dairy Air Quality Task Force issued a final report on July 1, 2008 — with a variety of recommendations, some of which were carried out as voluntary Best Management Practices...some were incorporated as public policy, such as tax credits to encourage the development of manure/methane digesters...and a few recommendations were not deemed priorities for funding or as state programs.

Every Governor since 2008 and every legislature has measured the recommendations of the Dairy Air Quality Task Force against the evolving realities of the scientific knowledge about air quality/public health and the practical realities of innovative and effective Dairy operations utilizing voluntary Best Management Practices aimed at protecting human health and the environment. We count on our elected officials to realize that evidence-based priority setting is the best way to evaluate and implement smart Oregon public policies - not regulatory schemes based on ideology and bias against certain dairy business models.

In this case, examples of scientific studies include the EPA air study of CAFOs, The Columbia River Gorge Air Study [2012], the NIOSH study of occupational safety and health related to dairy air emissions, and current EPA monitoring and website reporting on air quality:

- The EPA CAFO study was a research project on emissions from chicken, pork and dairy CAFO operations across the country. The study revealed the complexity of the topic and the failure of air quality studies by themselves to reach practical, actionable conclusions. By 2014 it was reported by E & E News that the project had “no end in sight” and recommendations would take years to develop.
- The Columbia River Gorge Air Study identified major air pollution sources from coal-powered energy plants, wood stoves, urban traffic congestion, and industrial plant operations in Canada and China. The study references Threemile Canyon Farms for its continuous adaptation of Best Management Practices - notably the development of a methane digester, the application of manure on our farm land and the limitation of storage times in our waste management lagoons [less than 20 days] to reduce ammonia emissions.



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- The NIOSH study [National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health] focused on employee health by on-site inspection and monitoring of air quality dairy locations where workers were exposed to intense emissions. The study concluded that all emissions on Threemile Canyon Farms were well within public health standards for employees — and that the most dangerous spot on the farm was on a raft in the middle of the waste management lagoons. Guard rails were installed for safety precautions and workers use common sense to avoid prolonged exposure at the lagoons.
- Current EPA monitoring indicates that dairy emissions are relatively low, contributing merely 1.5% of total U.S. emissions and that Oregon air quality is consistently rated as "good" ...testimony provided to this committee by air quality experts support these findings and they identify some national website tools that can put Oregon air quality issues in proper scientific perspective.

Since 2008, Oregon Dairies have addressed the issues raised in the Dairy Air Quality Task Force Report and made significant voluntary investments in Best Management Practices to address Air Quality and Public Health. A chart provided in an exhibit for the Committee's record demonstrates the range of practical solutions Oregon Dairies are utilizing to do their part in Grazing Management, Housing, Manure Storage and Land application to name just a few areas.

One of the consensus recommendations of the Dairy Air Task Force was to encourage the development and deployment of methane digesters. The State of Oregon introduced biomass tax credit programs to provide the incentive to develop these technologies. Since the introduction of the Biomass Tax Credit, digesters have been developed to handle approximately 35-40% of the dairy cows in Oregon, including the cows on our farm. The results have been dramatically positive - contributing to ecological benefits, Greenhouse Gas/Climate benefits, Energy development benefits and economic benefits [*see testimony of Daryl Maas, Farm Power Tillamook LLC for more useful information on manure digesters in Oregon*].

The inconvenient truth is that the motivation behind SB 197 is neither the pursuit of scientific knowledge or practical solutions on Oregon's dairies. The motivations that drive SB 197 are best understood by reading the media releases and listening to the statement of Friends of Family Farms and their special interest allies: "punish large-scale operations, impose costly bureaucratic regulations and shut down the development of any new commercial dairy operations in the State of Oregon." Obviously, this makes SB 197 a recipe for disaster:

- the cumbersome cycle of regulations and rule-making will actually slow down the innovative cycle of BMP environmental solutions enacted in the field and farm - environmental health and public safety will actually suffer;



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- the costs of regulations and delays will be passed on to consumers making Oregon agriculture less competitive and effectively imposing a regulatory tax on every cup of milk, pint of ice cream and plate of cheese;
- families who would welcome the growth of modern dairy operations in their rural communities will be denied a chance for family wage earning jobs and future economic prosperity.

The best path forward is to summon our Oregon shared values and work together to shape a public policy that is balanced, based on acknowledged scientific facts and designed to deliver practical results. It is a little hard to quantify - but it is an Oregon ethic of Coexistence. I feel its profound significance, because I am a fifth-generation Oregonian and my grandkids are seventh generation. My Great/Great Grandparents trekked to Oregon on the Oregon Trail and settled in North Powder, Oregon. I am personally invested in this magical place called Oregon...and I have spent my professional life seeking that unique Oregon Coexistence of economic opportunity and environmental preservation.

For 18 years, we have worked hard to accomplish something positive and lasting at Threemile Canyon Farms on the 144 square miles for which we are steward...intentionally, we have blended traditional respect for our land and livestock with modern techniques, we are proud of what we have accomplished for our workers, our neighbors and our customers...we face the future with confidence and optimism guided by our North Star: that coexistence of sound business practices and sound environmental practices. And we have come to learn that really good things happen when smart public policies are combined with smart and responsible business strategies and hard work, all attuned to achieving that goal of coexistence.

Seen through this lens, a lens rural Oregonians look through every day, it's impossible not to conclude that SB 197 is bad for Oregon and should be defeated because it sets us on a confrontational path, not a cooperative one. I urge you to vote no on SB 197 in this committee.

Thank you.