

July 28, 2019

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## Dear Administrator Wheeler:

Congressman Dan Newhouse from Washington's 4<sup>th</sup> congressional district does not speak for all of his constituents as he states in his letter to you dated June 26, 2019. At an April, 2017 town hall meeting in Sunnyside, WA, a room of 150 community members told him that immigration reform and dairies are our two biggest local issues. (Yakima Herald Republic, 2017)

This is a letter of community support for the 2012 – 2013 EPA research performed in the Lower Yakima Valley (LYV), entitled, *Relation between Nitrate in Water Wells and Potential Sources in the Lower Yakima Valley.* This research led to ongoing studies on three large LYV dairies that found:

- 61% of domestic wells one mile down gradient from the dairies deliver water that is unsafe for human consumption
- 30% of domestic wells three miles down gradient from the dairies deliver water that is unsafe for human consumption. (Safe levels for human consumption are < 10 mg/L)
- Nitrate levels in dairy monitoring wells were as high as 160 mg/l. 180 mg/l and even 234 mg/L. This last reading is one of the highest in the nation.
- One of the dairies over applied manure to cropland at rates as high as seven times the amount crops can utilize. (Crops can take up about 250 lbs of nitrogen per acre)
- Deep soil testing beneath abandoned lagoons found nitrate levels as high as ten times acceptable concentrations. (45 parts per million is passing)

There is no doubt that dairies in the LYV are major contributors to the dangerous groundwater pollution in our communities. When the congressman states otherwise he is adding mis-information to the discussion and confusing the issues. If this type of debate is allowed to continue the EPA may have to defend the scientific evidence for a three dimensional world against those who believe the earth is flat.

Two Yakima Valley dairymen have actually stated in the official newspaper for Yakima County that, "More likely, just five residential septic systems, or Onsite Sewage Systems (OSS) may contribute 20 to 30 times more than a one acre manure lagoon, according to EPA data and an in-depth analysis by agricultural scientists." (Yakima Herald Republic, 2019)

We understand your support for solving problems at the local and state level. This process only works when all stakeholders act in good faith. The struggling dairy industry does not act in good faith. Congressman Newhouse and his select "constituents" now resort to smoke and mirrors in order to retain their economic advantage, an advantage due to free water and tax payer subsidies.

For example, last winter 1,800 milk cows in the LYV died from exposure and trampling during high winds. The State of Washington chipped in \$100,000 to help dispose of the dead animals, no questions asked. The agencies involved will not even tell neighbors where the animals are being composted. How many middle class white communities would allow farmers to compost hundreds of animals next to their homes? But Washington State facilitates this in a poor community where Mexican Americans are a majority.

Here are more examples of dairy industry dirty tricks:

- The Lower Yakima Valley Groundwater Management Area (LYV GWMA) was created in 2012 to address the problem of groundwater pollution in the area. The GWMA had a 23 member advisory committee. Dairy stacked the committee with:
  - An out of area agronomist who was supposed to represent the fertilizer industry but actually works for dairies
  - o A community representative who is actually the wife of a dairyman
  - o A representative from the Yakima Dairy Federation
  - A representative from the Yakima Farm Bureau who also works for the Washington Dairy Federation
  - A representative from the WA State Dept. of Agriculture who also heads the WSDA Dairy Nutrient Management Program
  - A representative from the local conservation district who spends most of her time dealing with dairy nutrient management plans and approving plans that do not prevent groundwater pollution

- The LYV GWMA excluded the EPA study, *Relation between Nitrate in Water Wells and Potential Sources in the Lower Yakima Valley,* from analysis LYV groundwater pollution
- The LYV GWMA rejected joint action with the U.S. Geological Survey and excluded the 2015 USGS research, *Particle Tracking for Selected Groundwater Wells in the Lower Yakima River Basin, Washington,* from the analysis of LYV groundwater pollution
- When the GWMA report did not sufficiently absolve dairies from groundwater
  pollution the GWMA representative from the Dairy Federation published an opinion
  piece in the local Yakima Herald Republic stating contradictory data as fact; the
  Dairy Federation alternate sent a Letter to the Editor in which he used his status as a
  GWMA Sub-Committee Chairman to promote conclusions contrary to those reached
  by the GWMA.

There are times when the federal government is more objective and science based than elected representatives who are heavily influenced by special interest groups. This is one of those times. We ask you to defend the science and defend the courageous men and women who work for your very important branch of government, the Environmental Protection Agency. Without the EPA science, bad actors in communities like the LYV will turn wonderful farmland into garbage dumps.

The Friends of Toppenish Creek are happy to provide you with more in-depth information. In fact, we would consider it an act of irresponsibility on your part if you only meet with the Congressman.

Incidentally, Congressman Newhouse's wife is a lobbyist who apparently works for the dairy industry. (Politico, 2019)

Sincerely,

Jean Mendoza

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## References:

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