



Washington State Legislature

March 25, 2016

Maia Bellon
Director
Washington State Department of Ecology
300 Desmond Drive
Lacey, Washington 98503-1274

Dear Director Bellon,

We write to express our appreciation for your commitment to consider developing a state groundwater discharge general permit for certain dairy farms. We are particularly grateful for your willingness to work with representatives of the dairy industry to develop a fair and reasonable permit option. We respectfully request for you to continue these efforts as they are critical in allowing Washington dairies to operate successfully for years to come.

During the legislature's supplemental budget negotiations, it became clear that there is significant support among many legislators for the Department of Ecology to take action on developing a state groundwater discharge general permit for dairy farms that are not required to obtain permit coverage for surface water discharge. This support grows out of concern over uncertainty resulting from recent judicial decisions that raise important questions about the future of the dairy industry in Washington. Indeed, the 2016 legislature considered bills on the subject of state groundwater discharge general permits for dairy farms, and the 2017 legislature likely will too if the department is not able to satisfactorily address the issue in the meantime. However, this is an issue which is too important to wait.

We emphasize the urgency of this matter. The dairy industry is a major contributor to Washington's economy. The Washington Dairy Products Commission reports that dairy is the second-largest agricultural commodity produced in our state, with an annual economic impact exceeding \$3.2 billion. This means jobs with good wages. This means rural communities with an economic anchor. And this means tax revenue that can be put to work for the benefit of the people of Washington. We support the continued health and growth of this mainstay of Washington agriculture, and we ask the department to do the same. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Bruce Chandler - 15th
Senator Judy Warden 13th
Jim Hong Jul 15th
Guanne Van Woven 42

Dean Takko 19th
Matthews 14th
R. E. Bale 19th
D. V. Long 15th
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