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Opinion

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OUR VIEW

EPA puts CAFO emission measurement reg on hold

Livestock producers and dairymen got some good news for a change last week from the Environmental Protection Agency when it denied a petition by environmental groups to regulate concentrated animal feeding operations like factories under the Clean Air Act.

CAFOs may one day be regulated as sources of air pollution, but that day won't come anytime soon.

The EPA decision, posted in the Federal Register, answers a petition filed in 2009 by The Humane Society of the United States and other environmental groups.

The groups sought to bring concentrated animal feeding



Capital Press File

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has put on hold regulations that would require the measurement of emissions from cow manure.

operations under Section 111 of the Clean Air Act. The section requires stationary sources of air pollution to adopt the "best system" for reducing emissions. The groups said farms with a large number of animals harm human health, poison the

environment and cause climate change.

In a factory setting, measuring emissions is a relatively straightforward matter. Manufacturing and processing takes place in enclosed spaces. Ambient particles inside can be

measured, as can emissions from smoke stacks and other vents.

Manufacturing processes have been well studied and the resulting emissions are well understood.

CAFOs, however, are open-air operations. How do you measure the emissions of an individual Holstein? Is all manure created equal?

The petitioners first made their request in the early days of the Obama administration. But the agency put off making a decision throughout President Obama's tenure. His administration wasn't shy about imposing regulatory schemes if it could find even the thinnest excuse. If nothing else, that eight-year delay proves the

considerable technical challenges involved.

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt, in a letter to petitioners, acknowledged livestock are potential sources of air pollutants. The agency, however, doesn't have a reliable method for estimating animal emissions. Until it does, new rules could be unjustified and ineffective, according to Pruitt.

"Once the agency has sufficient information on CAFO emissions, it will determine the appropriate regulatory approach to address those emissions," he stated.

We would be surprised if these questions are settled anytime before 2020.

OUR VIEW



Costly hunt for middle ground on wolves

Francine Madden was used to walking into lions' dens, almost literally. She had mediated conflicts over wildlife conservation efforts across Africa and elsewhere, helping groups whose members held vastly divergent opinions on wildlife conservation to find middle ground.

To do that, she worked with them to build trust in her and one another so they could come off their extreme points of view.

When the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife first hired Madden to mediate the state Wolf Advisory Group, the parties impacted by the return of wolves to the state were at loggerheads. Discussions seemed to quickly degenerate, with most of the parties retreating to their corners.

Enter Madden, of the Human-Wildlife Conflict Collaboration — now called the Center for Conservation Peacebuilding. With experience around the world tackling issues such as the trafficking of wild elephants in Africa, Madden set about changing the debates into a dialogue, with each side allowed to have its say. Slowly at first, she helped build trust among the parties, who then set about coming up with a means of effectively managing wolves without putting ranchers out of business.

The concept of bringing in an outside consultant was sound. The folks at the state Department of Fish and Wildlife weren't making any headway. The state's wolf plan was unrealistic, agency leaders seemed caught in the crossfire between pro- and anti-wolf groups, and legislators and the governor were feeling the heat

from all sides.

But her efforts would be accompanied by a hefty price tag — about \$1.2 million for three years. The department has now signed a two-year, \$425,000 contract extension. She is paid \$400 an hour to consult by phone and \$8,000 a day to lead meetings in person. The contract also includes travel expenses. She will continue to work with the Wolf Advisory Group and train department staffers to help resolve conflicts as they arise in the future.

We have to admit we had two major concerns. The primary concern was the cost of the contract, which seemed out of line for a state that struggles each year to make ends meet. The other was Madden's initial penchant for closed meetings. The importance of the public knowing about everything said in such meetings cannot be overstated.

But we also need to recognize that Madden brought civility to the advisory group. Though we may not agree with the outcomes — we still see no reason to protect an apex predator whose population is increasing about 30 percent a year — progress has been made.

The one thing Madden couldn't do is prevent outliers such as the Center for Biological Diversity and Cascadia Wildlands from suing the state over wolf management. Their goal is to have a judge dictate how wolves are managed in Washington.

That would be a worst-case scenario for everyone.

Capital Press File

PHOTO: Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife consultant Francine Madden points to ideas from the department's Wolf Advisory Group during a meeting. The department has extended her contract for two years and \$425,000.

Readers' views

Burning on our own terms

There is a disconnect between air quality regulators and fire prevention efforts.

Day after day, when I call the Burn Day Status line in Siskiyou County, Calif., I hear that "Due to unfavorable atmospheric conditions, today is a non-

burn day..." Yet during the summertime we endure months of heavy smoke in the air because of devastating wildfires all around us.

Residents are each day losing opportunities to burn brush and other wildland debris, which would help reduce threat of summer wildfires and do much to protect homes and busi-

nesses in our communities. Why can't the air quality regulators step back and see the bigger picture? They stick to their rule-book, apparently without any regard for the collateral impacts of their policies.

Maybe the massive fires around Santa Rosa earlier this year, and those in Ventura County now this December, will serve to bring

government officials and regulators together to craft solutions to wildfire threats that are only getting worse year over year.

I am hopeful this is the case, but not particularly optimistic. We should be speaking up loud and clear, unshackle our hands, help us to help ourselves.

Denver Johnston
Scott Bar, Calif.

Oregon can help stop climate change

By CARLA WISE and STEVE GHAN
For the Capital Press



Guest comment
Carla Wise and Steve Ghan

The Capital Press editorial on Dec. 15 asks two important questions about Oregon's "Cap and Invest" proposal. 1) How much would this proposed policy reduce global temperature? 2) How much would it cost farmers? While key details in the policy are not finalized, we can provide some context and some answers.

It is helpful to split the first question into two: 1a) How much would the policy reduce emissions, and 1b) How much would the reduced emissions affect global temperature?

There are several examples of carbon emissions responding to carbon policy. Emissions in British Columbia decreased 20 percent compared with the rest of Canada after it set a modest \$30 per ton price on fossil carbon, and its economy performed as well as the rest of Canada. California's carbon policies are on track to reduce emissions more than 15 percent below 2015 levels by 2020, and its economy is flourishing. One study estimated a 50 percent reduction in U.S. carbon emissions after 20 years if a U.S. price on carbon increases \$10 per ton each year, with 2 million additional jobs added if the revenue is returned equally to all residents.

While Oregon's contributions to global emissions reductions under the "Cap and Invest" bill would be small compared to global emissions, Oregon would be doing its part and contributing to the solution. Every country in the world except the U.S. is committed to the substantial emissions reductions pledged at the Paris Climate Conference in 2015. California and many other states have specific policies. Many corporations have specific policies, too; even oil companies such as Shell and Exxon support a price on carbon and are major investors in carbon-free energy. Numerous cities have pledged to reduce carbon emissions. If Oregon, along with other states and countries, meet the emissions reduction targets, emissions at the end of the century will be 30 percent less than now and less than half of estimated emissions without the Paris Climate Agreement.

How much would the reduced emissions affect global temperature? We don't need models to know that carbon dioxide affects climate. Ice cores from Antarctica tell us the 9F temperature swings between ice ages and interglacial warm periods over the last million years are always associated with carbon dioxide concentration changes comparable to the 30 percent increase directly measured over the last 60 years. Such climate changes cannot be explained without accounting for the changes in greenhouse gas concentrations. So a 50 percent reduction in carbon emissions will make a difference, reducing

warming at 2100 from about 6-7F to 3-4F.

Farmers have a lot to lose from climate change. We rely on mountain snowpack as a natural reservoir of water supplying our irrigation needs during the dry summer months. Precipitation is already more extreme than it used to be. My own research suggests a 70 percent loss of mountain snowpack in the western U.S. by 2100 with modest action to reduce carbon emissions. Trees would be stressed by drier soils and more prone to fires. Winter floods would be much more common.

Farmers will benefit from reductions in global carbon emissions. The Paris emissions reductions will prevent devastating impacts, but global warming would still deplete mountain snowpack by 50 percent by 2100. A more aggressive carbon fee and dividend proposed by Citizens Climate Lobby could limit warming to 2 degrees and further reduce extreme weather and impacts on mountain snowpack.

Oregon's "Cap and Invest" proposal is designed to fulfill Oregon's contribution to emissions reductions while protecting Oregon's farmers, businesses and workers. The draft bill currently contains specific benefits for farmers: it earmarks 20 percent of funds for projects in rural areas, earmarks funds for carbon sequestration projects on farms, as well as funds to subsidize carbon-free energy throughout the state. But because the bill is still being crafted, we cannot say exactly how the proposal would impact the cost of gasoline, diesel, electricity and other items that farmers and ranchers rely on. A \$10 per ton carbon fee would raise gas prices about 10 cents per gallon. Recent drafts of the legislation contain provisions aimed at protecting Oregon's farmers, and we applaud the voice Capital Press provides to call for key details and a complete analysis to ensure the Oregon policy is good for farmers.

We call on all Americans, and especially farmers, to engage in efforts to transition away from carbon emitting activities and thus limit global temperatures to levels at which farms and people can thrive.

Carla Wise, Ph.D., is a plant conservation biologist, writer and volunteer with Citizens' Climate Lobby. She lives in Corvallis, Ore., and is a strong advocate for Oregon food and farms. Steve Ghan, Ph.D., is a highly cited climate scientist and contributor to the IPCC assessment reports. He leads the Tri-Cities, Wash., chapter of the Citizens Climate Lobby.