

# Water Rights: Environmental Groups Challenge Oregon Water Resources Department Approval of Dairy Farm Transfer Application



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Columbia Riverkeeper, Center for Biological Diversity, Center for Food Safety, Food & Water Watch, Humane Oregon, and WaterWatch of Oregon (collectively "Columbia Riverkeeper") filed a protest to an application and Preliminary Determination ("Preliminary Determination") by the Oregon Water Resources Department ("Department") in regards to water rights for a dairy farm in the vicinity of the Columbia River in Oregon.

The challenge to Preliminary Determination is styled:

*In the Matter of Transfer Application*

*T-12248. Morrow County*

*(Application by Sale Hollow Ranch LLC)*

Columbia Riverkeeper argues that the Preliminary Determination would allow Willow Creek Dairy and/or Lost Valley Farm ("Willow Creek") to use water rights previously held by a different holder at a new location. They further state that new wells would be utilized for a year-round operation of a dairy holding eventually 30,000 cows. The water is also projected to be used in dairy operations to cool milk and wash animal waste from the barns. It is stated that approximately 1.036.72 acre feet of water per year would be utilized.

Columbia Riverkeeper challenges the Department's allowance of such water rights generally arguing:

- The Preliminary Determination would result in the use of more water per acre than occurred under the previous water rights
- Willow Creek would divert more water at the new point of appropriation than has been legally available to the prior water rights holder
- Use of water by Willow Creek as proposed will result in another existing water right not receiving previously available water to which it is legally entitled
- Use of water by Willow Creek will diminish the quality of groundwater and/or surface water through return flows
- Willow Creek is not ready, willing and able to use the full amount of water allowed under the water rights

[A copy of the Protest of Transfer Application can be downloaded here.](#)

