



November 4, 2017

To Whom It May Concern:

On October 12, 2017 the Yakima Regional Clean Air Agency (YRCAA) Board of Directors rejected a petition from citizens to ban the spreading and spraying of manure during burn bans. This simple measure would prevent farmers from adding ammonia, hydrogen sulfide, oxides of nitrogen, volatile organic compounds and fine particulate matter to the air when levels of pollution are in the unhealthy or hazardous range.

There was a quorum. Three out of the five board members were present. Bill Lover, a Yakima City Councilman and Norm Childress, Mayor of the City of Grandview, are elected officials and, in legal terms, are presumed to represent the public interests. These two men voted to reject the petition and it was defeated.

This is a public health issue. It is noteworthy that the YRCAA Director consulted with experts from animal agriculture when he made a recommendation to reject the petition, but he did not talk to experts from public health.

People in Yakima County suffer higher rates of myocardial infarction, asthma hospitalization and pre-term births than any of the other large Washington counties, and these conditions are directly related to higher levels of fine particulate air pollution. Four people provided public comments in support of the petition.

Petitioners agreed that the prohibition is an inconvenience for farmers but it is no greater than the inconvenience of not being able to burn agricultural waste when the air is unhealthy.

One man argued against the petition. Steve George is employed by the Yakima Dairy Federation, and he argued that dairies are already highly regulated. (Washington's Dairy Nutrient Management Program does not address air pollution and the YRCAA's *Air Quality Management Policy for Dairies* is silent regarding manure application during burn bans.) Mr. George felt that best management practices require giving the crops a little fertilizer at a time and therefore spraying and spreading should be allowed when the air is unhealthy or hazardous.

The affected population in the Lower Yakima Valley has high levels of poverty and a significant percentage speak English less than well. Regarding this group that is less able to participate in local policy making, Mr. George surprisingly stated,

*They talked about who might be affected in the lower valley. Well the dairy industry is second only to apples in the Yakima Valley . . . We employ nearly 5,000 people. Over 90%, probably closer to 99% Hispanic . . . So those people I feel I represent along with the 60 or 70 farm owners and families. Those people like their full time jobs. They like to be able to go down and buy their homes and their cars.*

*So there's all this stuff against the dairies but the dairies are the biggest employers of minorities and I think those minorities like their jobs. I've been on dairies and I've never had one of those guys tell me they don't like their job. There probably is a person out there but for the most part they like their jobs. (Transcribed from Y-PAC video tape)*

(Mr. George conveniently omitted the fact that farmworkers are currently engaged in a class action lawsuit against a lower valley dairy for failing to provide adequate meal and rest breaks and not paying for all time worked.)

Is the Yakima Dairy Federation authorized or entitled to speak on behalf of 5,000 farmworkers? Is the Yakima Dairy Federation qualified to address public health concerns? It appears that at least two members of the YRCAA board of directors believe this is so.

Respectfully,

*The Friends of Toppenish Creek*