

Sandy Braden

Dr. Morris:

I am a life long resident of the Yakima Valley who was raised in White Swan which is the heart of the Yakama reservation. We raised beef cattle, hay, corn, pigs and barley. So basically, I am a farm girl at heart.

However, I am deeply concerned by what I see happening to our Yakima Valley, specifically in the over usage and pollution of water in the lower valley by the large dairies. This concerns me because I have personal experience with what can happen to water resources if they are not properly managed.

My parents' farm was the last one on the Wapato Irrigation line southwest of White Swan. I received a phone call from the new owner asking what did we do for irrigation water for the property. I told him my father bought irrigation water that came down the side of the Hawk Road and the Pine Cone road in a ditch from the irrigation company.

The new farm owner said, not any more. The last four farms or so on that ditch had no access to that water any more. Fortunately for him, we told him about an old shallow well that was on the back forty, which was the original well when the house was built in 1917. We encouraged him to deepen it so he could irrigate the back 40. The south 40 was another matter.

My second example comes from my experience teaching in Saudi Arabia for ARAMCO oil. Every house in Abqaiq, which is in the eastern province, had two water faucets. One was the raw water faucet which had reddish ground water coming from it. The second faucet was the sweet water faucet which was our drinking water. It was the de-salted sea water.

Now, there is no raw water faucet anymore on sinks because the ground water no longer exists. The Saudi leaders decided they wanted their country to become a wheat producing entity in the late 1980s, early 1990s. That decision caused them to use up the ground water. I did not believe that could actually happen until I heard a water expert, Dr. Rachel Cardone, talk about this occurrence. I verified it with a contractor friend who still works in Saudi. He said there is only one faucet on the sinks now.

With your extensive environmental, educational and professional background, you must be aware that water resources are not limitless. The Yakima Valley, is after all, irrigated desert. Without access to enough water, we go back to sagebrush, jack rabbits and coyotes instead of rich farm land. This valley could be the next version of what is now happening in California, Nevada and Arizona.

Ecology needs to step up by actively gathering the necessary data and requiring every dairy to have and implement their dairy management plan. And more than anything, that plan must be aggressively enforced by Ecology.

As an educator, I have found that without the proper enforcement, rules don't mean much.

I respectfully ask that you as an environmentally aware member of the WA State Department of

Ecology seriously consider my above statements. Your new CAFO permit must recognize that our climate, our water supply and our water quality is changing dramatically right now. Ecology must fulfill its mission statement and be more than a puppet of the dairy industry.

Thank you.
Sandy Braden-FOTC