



Friends of Toppenish Creek

September 27, 2024

Stephanie Potts
Cap-and-Invest Program Linkage Planner
Washington Department of Ecology
300 Desmond Drive SE
Lacey, WA 98503

Re: Washington's Proposed Linkage Plans

Dear Ms. Potts:

The Friends of Toppenish Creek send this message to Ecology and citizens of Washington who do not live with the immediate adverse impacts of factory farms. FOTC detects an unwarranted emphasis on manure-based biofuels as green energy in California's efforts to address climate change.¹ We remind the citizens of Washington that concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) cost taxpayers millions of dollars every year due to poorly regulated air and water pollution.²

FOTC specifically asks the State of Washington to delay linkage with California and Quebec until all facts are on the table regarding the impact of offsets and carbon intensity scores that unfairly advantage biofuels produced from animal manure.

It is obvious from reading Ecology's written, spoken, and on-line statements that the agency has dedicated significant resources to analyzing economic impacts of linkage. One would almost conclude that the Department of Ecology is a subsidiary of the Department of Commerce. FOTC and others would welcome an equally in-depth analysis of how we in Washington use the land, how California uses the land, and specifically how concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) change the landscape in both states. In line with

¹ Testimony of Dan Chandler from Climate Action California, and Brent Newell from Public Justice at Short-Lived Climate Pollutants Program – Dairy Sector Workshop, on August 22, 2024. Recording available at [Short-Lived Climate Pollutants Program: Meetings & Workshops | California Air Resources Board](#)

² WA State Dept. of Ecology. Nitrate in Ground Water, Data & Assessment. Available at [Nitrate data & assessment - Washington State Department of Ecology](#)

Washington's State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) such an analysis and comparison should be completed before Washington considers linkage.

To our reading linkage would modify Washington public policy in ways that give factory farms and monocropping significant economic advantages over smaller farms and agricultural diversity. By adapting our policies to make them compatible with the larger state we would become more like the larger state. At this stage major choices and alternatives are still available.

Before Washington takes the leap to join the California model, our agencies should study the issues below in more depth:

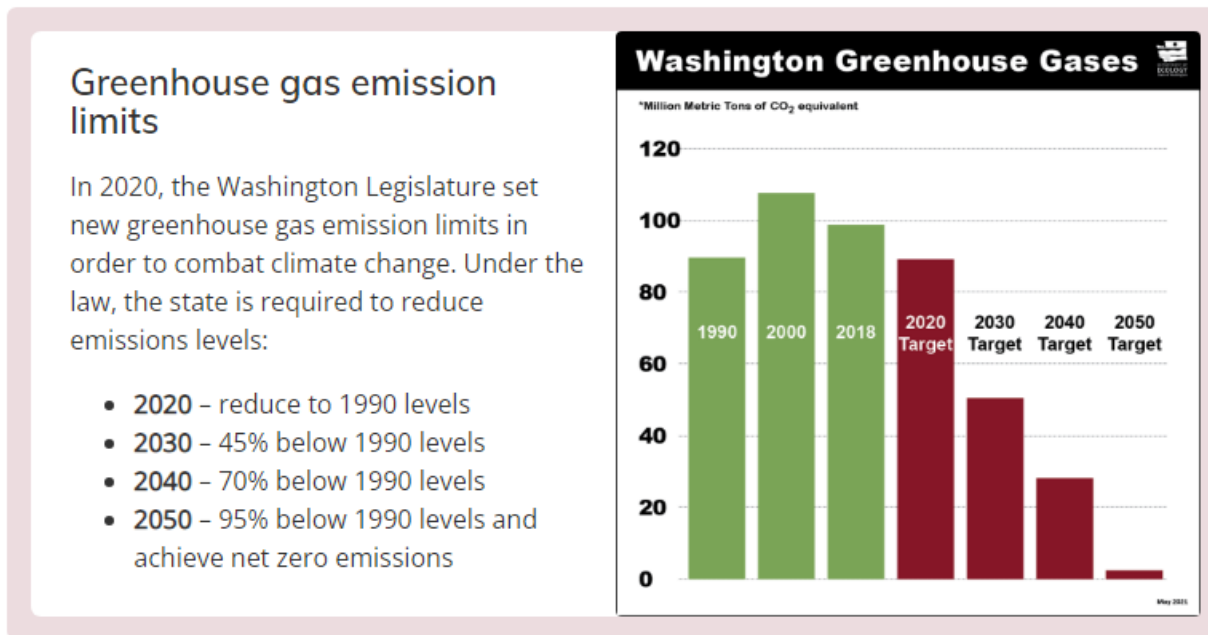
- What are the short-term and long-term benefits and costs when farmland is devoted to producing biofuels rather than food?
- How does linkage favor large factory farms?
- Who benefits from California Air Resources Board (CARB) livestock protocols and low carbon intensity scores?
- Who is impacted by CARB livestock protocols and low carbon intensity scores, and how are they harmed?
- What are the benefits of agricultural diversity? Does the California model support agricultural diversity?
- What are the benefits of biological diversity? Does the California model support biological diversity?
- How does monocropping impact the environment and the economy?
- Which crops require more water? Does the California model address water usage?
- How do CAFOs impact the environment in California compared to Washington?
 - Soil
 - Air
 - Water
 - Communities
- What are the cumulative costs of producing biofuels from animal manure?
- Why doesn't California account for cumulative costs of producing biofuels from animal manure in their calculation of carbon intensity scores and offsets?
- When will California resolve the debate over biomethane in their low carbon fuel standard?
- Would linkage commit Washington permanently to liquid manure management that produces much more methane than dry manure management?
- How would the agricultural policies that accompany linkage impact rivers, streams, aquatic life and endangered species?

When FOTC is optimistic, we anticipate that Ecology will follow up on some of these recommendations. When we are pessimistic, we fear that Ecology has been politicized to the point that corporate investors make decisions, and the agency is only a tool to promote those special interests. Let us elaborate.

The scientific process involves trial and error. We make a hypothesis, test it, and accept it or reject it. Good scientists make certain they have gathered sufficient and accurate data to make informed decisions.

At times Ecology does this well. At other times Ecology seems unable to accept test results that do not support outcomes that influential leaders desire.

For example, here is a screenshot of GHG Emission Limits from Ecology's web page entitled "Greenhouse Gasses" at [Tracking greenhouse gases - Washington State Department of Ecology](#)



The agency displays the data as though the 2020 reduction levels had been achieved. They were not. Greenhouse gas emissions for Washington were 102 MMCO₂e in 2020. We did not achieve our goals. But Ecology does not admit this, at least in this chart. If we do not admit a problem exists, it is difficult to make necessary changes to fix the problem.

Here is a second example. The Environmental Protection Agency has researched water quality in the Lower Valley and proved that CAFOs make well water unsafe to drink for

people who live down gradient. ³ Ecology has countered with research to establish a baseline for LYV groundwater quality that excludes the EPA data from the analysis and pretends that groundwater in the area is safe to drink. ⁴

Ever hopeful, FOTC asks Ecology to take a leadership role in characterizing climate change for our state and conducting an in-depth and scientific analysis of all major consequences of linkage, not just those consequences that impact the stock market.

On a separate but important note:

We can learn from the mistakes of others. We do not have to repeat them. Among other problems, land in some parts of California is sinking due to groundwater depletion.⁵ This exacerbates geological instability and increases the frequency and severity of tremors and earthquakes. This is especially relevant for Washington because we have a feature unknown in the south. We have the largest depository of nuclear waste in the nation right next to the Columbia River. Washington cannot afford an earthquake that releases nuclear waste into the river that is the lifeblood for the eastern part of the state. Too many loose connections? Too many “what ifs”? Not for something this important.

Sincerely,

Friends of Toppenish Creek

3142 Signal Peak Road
White Swan, WA 98952

³ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Lower Yakima Valley Groundwater. [Lower Yakima Valley Groundwater | US EPA](#)

⁴ Lower Yakima Valley Groundwater Management Area. Tetra Tech Nitrate Mapping. Available at [Tetra Tech Nitrate Mapping | Yakima County, WA](#)
WA Ecology. Eyes Underground. Available at [Eyes Underground: Lower Yakima Valley \(arcgis.com\)](#)

⁵ Los Angeles Times. Land is sinking as groundwater levels drop. [Will California's Central Valley stop sinking? - Los Angeles Times \(latimes.com\)](#)