

## Multnomah County Planning

Re: T3-2022-16220

My name is Jesse Nelson I am a third generation nurseryman and I here to express my opposition to the Portland Water Bureau's decision to build a water treatment plant on high-value farmland in East Multnomah County.

This decision is deeply troubling, not only because of the irreparable damage it would do to some of the most productive agricultural soil in the state, but also because it signals a troubling disregard for Oregon's long-standing commitment to farmland preservation and sustainable land use. Once this land is paved over it is lost forever — and with it, the opportunity to support rural livelihoods, and environmental resilience.

Oregon's land use system was built to protect farmland from exactly this kind of short-sighted development. Prime farmland, particularly in urban fringe areas, is under constant threat. Yet this is the very land that supports our food security, our economy, and our rural communities. Sacrificing 92 acres of high-value soil in a region that is rapidly urbanizing erodes the foundation of one of Oregon's most vital and irreplaceable natural resources.

The proposed facility not only contradicts the spirit of Oregon's land use goals but undermines trust in public institutions tasked with serving the common good. The Water Bureau has alternatives. Choosing prime farmland simply because it is available or convenient is not acceptable when other options exist that don't destroy a valuable natural resource.

This land isn't just dirt. It is living soil, part of a unique ecological and agricultural system that cannot be replicated. It supports crops, wildlife, pollinators, and rural heritage. Once converted to industrial use, it will be stripped of its function and value for generations, all to serve a project that could be located elsewhere.

In a time of climate uncertainty, the importance of protecting farmland cannot be overstated. Local farms shorten supply chains, reduce food insecurity, sequester carbon, and support biodiversity. Farmland is not an afterthought — it is essential infrastructure and an irreplaceable natural resource. Treating it as expendable threatens the long-term sustainability and resilience of our region.

The Portland Water Bureau should be held to the same standard as any private developer: use existing industrial or urbanized land permitted for the use. Do not target farmland that generations of Oregonians have fought to protect. Once gone, it's gone forever. That loss is too great of a price for a public agency to impose on the public it claims to serve.

I urge decision-makers to reject the use of this farmland for the treatment plant and demand the Portland Water Bureau find an alternative that aligns with Oregon's values and legal framework for land use planning.

For technical details of the deficiencies of the decision please refer to the letter submitted by the Oregon association of nurseries.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Jesse Nelson