

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 20, 2024

Director Leah Feldon
Oregon Department of Environmental Quality
4026 Fairview Industrial Drive SE
Salem, OR 97302

Dear Director Feldon,

We are writing you today to echo concerns raised by the Crook County Board of Commissioners regarding your interagency agreement with the Oregon Department of Geology and Mineral (DOGAMI) to act as your agent for Knife River Corporation-West's WPCF 1000 permit in Crook County. Despite your interagency agreement, the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) still has a crucial responsibility to exercise its oversight authority in order to protect Crook County residents who rely on this aquifer as the primary source of their drinking water.

There are significant reports of emerging public health concerns facing the residents near this site. They are experiencing black water and elevated manganese and aluminum levels in their well water. The residents have continued to raise concerns over unsafe drinking water and potential health impacts to humans including skin rashes, as well as health impacts to livestock and domestic animals, including unexplained deaths of cows and chickens. It is reported that the contaminants are also causing clogged pipes and significant damage to appliances.

As you know, elevated levels of manganese and aluminum can have a detrimental effect on the health of the community, especially on vulnerable populations. Swift action is needed to support this community, to get answers to their serious concerns and protect community health. In January 2024, the Crook County Court members sent you a letter requesting your review of this concerning situation. Without your oversight, there is a real sense of concern amongst the community regarding DOGAMI's process and concerns are growing daily.

We are encouraged to learn the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality has heard these concerns and will be working with the community and the Oregon Health Authority on a plan for sampling and analysis of the wells. We stand ready as federal partners to support these efforts.

Sincerely,



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator