

May 15, 2024

Natural Resources Conservation Board
Agriculture Centre, 100, 5401 1 Avenue S
Lethbridge, Alberta T1J 4V6

To: Kelsey Peddle, Et al.

**Re: Application LA24002 – Statement of Concerns
Van Huigenbos Farms Ltd.
SE 21-9-26 W4M**

This letter serves as an official statement of concerns; in objection to the expansion application **LA24002**. We strongly oppose the consideration of this expansion based on the following concerns, all of which have high potential for substantial negative impacts on the surrounding area, the current infrastructure and public safety, the environment, as well as the proximity to and consequential impact to densely populated neighbouring areas.

Summary of Concerns:

1. Water (Source water supply, high-risk ground water, and high-risk surface water, potable water well density).
2. Public Infrastructure and Public Safety.
3. Smell/Airborne Pollution.
4. Garbage Pollution.
5. Waste Pollution (Manure and Carcass Management).
6. Population Density.
7. Population Proximity (MDS).

1. Water

The applicant to the best of our knowledge has not yet received approval for water usage, nor have they stated the intended source of water to support the operation expansion if approved. There can be assumptions made around the intended source, however, with the current water situation both locally and nationally it would be negligent to consider this application without considering the potential impact it can and will have on multiple water sources; including but not limited to:

- ***Aquifer and Surrounding Potable Water Wells***– There is a high risk, low restrictive layer, shallow below ground aquifer that runs directly below the subject property, which feeds potable water wells to a high number of surrounding households and extends as far as Orton and beyond. The consideration of this application will put this invaluable, high risk natural resource at risk of not only contamination but also potentially increased demand leaving thousands of households without drinking water. Reviewal of the area water well

reports clearly indicate the number of households depending on this water source to survive. To consider this application without the consideration of this concern would be unethical and negligent.

- **Groundwater** – The subject property sits directly above and adjacent to the at-risk Willow Creek. It is common knowledge that this freshwater source is at risk and has been under a great deal of concern in recent years due to the continually worsening drought conditions. The consideration of this application would be potentially compromising not only the water quality of this freshwater source but also, potentially increasing the demand on the water, decreasing the flow, of which is already a great concern to all local parties and governing bodies. This creek is a downstream source of livestock water for 100+-year ranches, irrigation water for local farmers and recreational use for the nearby Municipal Campground and ultimately feeds into the Old Man River. We have seen and have provided visible evidence of waste runoff from the current operation, directly down the adjacent hill and towards Willow Creek. One can safely assume that with the proposed increase in numbers this waste flow will increase as well; potentially compromising Willow Creek by exposing it to potential of increased pollution. The approval of this application without the above considerations for the most valuable resource we have would be considered willful negligence in our opinion, carelessly putting 1000's at risk for the benefit of few.
- **Source Water Supply** – It is our understanding that the applicant has not yet secured approval for the water supply for the proposed expansion. One can assume that the water supply will come from a limited number of options, all of which raise great concern.
 1. Willow Creek – As previously stated this creek can not and will not support the increased demand on it at its current and forecasted flow rates.
 2. Below Ground Aquifer – As previously stated this aquifer may not be able to support the increased demand on it based on the increased requirements of the expansion.
 3. Hauling Water to a Storage Facility – As I will state below the infrastructure and the one road in and out of the property simply wont support the increased traffic of a steady water haul to and from the property. This is not a viable option.

With livestock operations taking water priority in emergency situations; the approval of this application without prior water approval from the applicable governing bodies, and the sharing of the approved intended water source with all potentially affected parties should not be considered due to the massive, irreversible affect it could have on all other water users in the area.

2. Public Infrastructure and Public Safety

The subject property sits near the end of a no exit road, restricting the property to only one road in and one road out of the applicant's property. It is common knowledge within the area that this road system as it stands does not have the capacity to withstand the demands on it at the operations

current scale. The applicant has shown zero regard to date to be personally accountable to the abuse of the road and the consequential affect to the neighboring families. The high volume of traffic on this road and the continued degradation of the roadway has posed an increased safety risk and concern to the families who rely on this road daily. The applicant is the only commercial and/or farming operation utilizing the road and the complete disregard for its degrading condition as well as the safety concerns that the increased traffic raise are concerns that must be considered prior to approval. Public safety must be of top priority for all governing bodies. Very simply put this roadway and the safety of those travelling it will be compromised with the consideration of any expansion to the applicants' operations.

3. Smell, Dust and Airborne Pollution

The applicant property sits directly to the West and upwind of over 50 rural residential properties as well as the Town of Fort Macleod, all of which fall under 5 kms from the subject property. Several residential properties fall within 2 kms down wind of the SE corner of the property and literal meters from the proposed manure spreading location. The Town of Fort Macleod is under 2 kms down wind of the SE corner of the property and this must be considered. We personally have and continue to see the loss of crop to the Quarter section directly across the road to the East of the property due to dust and other airborne particulates that are generated directly from the current operation that settle on the crop causing a crust to form. The concern of airborne pollutants combined with the concern of increased smell due to the increased amount of waste generated make this matter a very valid concern to all neighboring parties. It is safe to say that the approval of this application will result in a drastic increase to both airborne particulate pollution as well as smell pollution all of which will contribute to a substantial decrease in quality of life to the densely populated area in which would be affected. The consideration of an expansion of this size in such a highly populated area within proximity to the Town of Fort Macleod Municipal Boundary and within the Town of Fort Macleod and the MD of Willow Creeks Intermunicipal Development boundaries must consider the potential affect on all residents within those areas. Additional consideration should also be given to the land location and land volume for the land base intended for manure and compost application. The majority of the listed land base is directly across the road from The Town of Fort Macleod, in close proximity to a densely populated area. Furthermore, we would like to ask the question on if the proposed land base considered the dry corners of the listed irrigated, usable acres. If not, is this a sufficient land base?

4. Garbage Pollution

Over the last number of years, as a direct neighboring property to the applicant we have seen a steady increase in the amount of garbage and littering coming directly from the property. Our family has had to work tirelessly to remove garbage and waste from the adjacent properties and the Willow Creek valley. The applicant has shown zero regard for garbage that is consistently having to be removed from the neighboring properties as it has blown from the property into the neighbors'

property as well as into the Willow Creek valley. An increase in the operation size will inevitably result in an increase in the amount of waste and littering that will take place from the operation. This will have a substantial negative impact not only on neighboring properties affected by the litter but also on the environment as the litter makes its way to the neighboring Willow Creek Valley. This must be a concern of consideration by the governing body as it is a substantial environmental concern.

5. Waste Pollution (Manure and Compost Management *including carcass management)

We as a neighbouring resident have grave concerns regarding the high potential for increased waste pollution relating to manure management. Over the years we have seen an increase in the amount of waste pollution coming from the applicant's operation due to poor manure, compost and carcass management standards. A few examples of such include the witnessing of waste runoff coming directly from the operation, down hill directly into neighboring properties and alarmingly close to the neighboring Willow Creek; some of which comes directly from a buried pipe installed by the applicant discharging near neighboring properties. The applicant has been referenced in saying they are grandfathered in, and they will dump as much waste as they want down the hill. Although we can not substantiate that statement, it combined with our witnessing of poor waste management habits raise increased valid reason for concern with the consideration for any expansion. An increase in waste coming from the operation without ethical handling of such waste, including a valid waste management plan can and will lead to the degradation of the neighboring properties and the potential pollution of Willow Creek, the below ground aquifer, and the Willow Creek Valley. The adverse affect that improper manure management and carcass management would have on the Willow Creek alone could be irreversible. This should be a substantial concern to all governing bodies including the NRCB and Alberta Environment.

6. Population Density

The subject location is in a densely populated area, near both dense rural populations as well as dense urban areas. As such it is a concern of ours that fair consideration has not been given to the location of the application and the consequences of its approval for those residing in the area. The operation in its current capacity is tolerable and safe for the neighboring communities but the approval of this application within a densely populated area will have adverse affects on all neighboring properties. We raise the question of why compromise so many for the benefit of so few. We have spoken to many neighboring families all of which have similar concerns regarding the future of their wellbeing and quality of life if the expansion is approved. Majority of those spoken to have all made the same statement, they do not object the operation, its simply in an inadequate location due to all the above and below listed rational. To consider this application without the consideration for the hundreds if not thousands of residents in the affected area would be unjust and improper to say the least. These families can assume a change in their quality of life, their overall property value as well as the additional health and safety concerns listed previously. It

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would be unethical for any Government based governing body to not take this into account while making a decision of such magnitude.

7. Population Proximity (MDS)

As previously stated, this location falls within a densely populated area with multiple neighboring residential properties falling in close proximity to the operation. We would like to raise the concern regarding the MDS under the new expansion factor. As you are aware there are multiple family residences lying within proximity to the MDS. The greatest concern lies with the Kostelansky property in which they are listed at a distance of 530 meters with the MDS listed at 526 meters. It is our understanding that this distance and compliance with the MDS is subject to the removal of existing infrastructure on the property. One of our concerns is based on previous stop work orders and disregard for process within the development of the property and how that applies to the compliance of the MDS. We would like to question the accuracy of the measurement of the listed 530 meters to the Kostelansky property as it falls within 4 meters of being inside the MDS. How was this distance measured? What were the two points of measurement? Will the existing infrastructure be removed and not re-installed? These are all concerns we have pertaining to a vital portion of the application in which there is very minimal margin for error (4 Meters). We feel that having an affected party within 4 meters of the MDS is and should be to all parties a major concern.

In summary, we feel that the above listed concerns should be of consideration to the NRCB in the approval process for application LA24002. We feel that the location of the proposed expansion does not allow for safe and respectful operations at the proposed capacity. The approval of this application without fair consideration to the above listed concerns would show a complete disregard for key factors such as water protection and conservation, environmental impact, public safety and the well-being of neighboring communities and families. As such, we thank you for your consideration of these concerns and trust your handling of this sensitive matter.

Respectfully,



Connie Dersch-Gunderson



















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