

## **Rebuttal to S.32 - Portland Water Bureau claims of responsible stewardship**

Cottrell CPO

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May, 19 2025

PWB claims in S.32 page 13 / Exhibit 4 that it is a “dedicated steward of the land”.

However, even in the beginning stages of construction of this filtration plant, PWB has shown it has not stewarded two natural resources (groundwater and soils) very carefully or with respect to the humans using them.

### **Groundwater**

PWB does not seem to be an adequate steward of groundwater, one of our area’s important natural resources.

Exhibit S.14 was written by Adam Brooks, Olsen Well Drilling & Pump. An expert in groundwater and wells, he details the danger to the area’s groundwater from the filtration plant project, especially the 13 domestic wells within 1000 feet of the projects’ activities.

Already, one of these, the Walter well, has failed, due to the filtration plant activities.

Olsen details steps that PWB could be taking to be a good steward of groundwater overall such as conducting a comprehensive hydrogeologic impact study, researching baseline water level data, or putting in place an independent monitoring program. PWB has taken none of them.

Instead, Olsen states that PWB has been “reactive and slow, not proactive”. In the case of the Walter well, “PWB eventually replaced the well, but only after prolonged disruption to the homeowner”.

With their failure to take proactive measures, and with the example of their slow redressing of the Walter well case, PWB has not stewarded our community’s groundwater, an important natural resource, with skill or care.

### **Soil**

Cottrell CPO received the following testimony from Emma Clarke Flores, a mother to a new baby who lives near a dump site for soils coming from the filtration plant.

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## **Concerns About Contaminated Soil and Environmental Mismanagement**

May 12, 2025

Flores Family  
23202 SE Hoffmeister Rd  
Damascus, OR 97089  
cagen.flores@gmail.com

We are writing to express our serious concerns regarding the mishandling of contaminated soil and the resulting environmental damage caused by inadequate oversight from the Water Bureau.

As with all government contracts involving hazardous materials, the Water Bureau is responsible for ensuring the proper handling, transportation, and disposal of toxic substances. This includes guaranteeing that all processes involved are safe, transparent, and do not pose risks to public health or the environment.

### **Contaminated Soil Dumping in Our Neighborhood**

Last winter, our family — along with many of our neighbors — witnessed thousands of dump trucks traveling through our residential area. These trucks were transporting contaminated soil to a previously undisturbed, vacant lot next door. This lot had remained untouched for over 40 years and is part of a natural watershed that flows into protected creeks, which serve as vital habitats for fish and wildlife.

Many of the trucks carrying the contaminated soil were regularly uncovered as they traveled through our schools and neighborhoods, and soil was seen spilling along neighborhood roads. Numerous residents reported on community platforms that their vehicles were being coated in dust and dirt and were asking where all the dump trucks were going and what they were doing. It seemed only a handful of people know what was happening because our community was not informed. Soon after the lot was acquired by new owners, they began clearing trees and burning green wood — even during rain — producing thick, black smoke that filled the air. During this time, our newborn baby developed severe coughing fits. We later learned that the soil being dumped nearby was contaminated.

### **Wildlife Displacement and Environmental Harm**

As the land was cleared, we witnessed displaced wildlife — including deer, owls, coyotes, herons, and other birds — fleeing into our property. The sudden destruction of their habitat was both heartbreaking and alarming.

We later discovered that the Water Bureau was fully aware the soil contained hazardous chemicals, including DDT and Dieldrin. According to the Bureau's contract with the Sesters, the plan was to mix millions of pounds of this toxic soil with "virgin" soil from Damascus to dilute contamination and then sell it back to the community in the form of plants — a disturbing strategy with potentially serious consequences.

### **Lack of Oversight and Violation of Public Trust**

Neighbors have raised similar concerns, expressing frustration at being ignored or silenced. When we personally contacted the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) to inquire about health risks, my communication was forwarded — without consent — to the Sester family. Instead of hearing from DEQ staff, I was contacted directly by the Sesters, undermining the confidentiality of my inquiry and eroding public trust.

There has been no visible regulatory oversight of the transport, storage, or dumping of the contaminated soil. This lack of accountability is putting our air, water, and community health at risk. To this day, the contaminated soil remains piled near sensitive streams that feed our local ecosystem.

### **Additional Concerns**

During the clearing of the two adjacent lots, we observed significant changes to the land's natural topography, carried out with industrial-sized machinery. These alterations compromised natural water flow and increased the risk of erosion. At one point, a large excavator crossed into our private property during active burning operations — a clear safety hazard and boundary violation.

The hauling and dumping activity began daily at 6:00 AM — including on Christmas Day — and extended late into the night under industrial floodlights. Hundreds of trucks flooded our streets without any traffic control. The intensity and frequency of the work disrupted our lives and raised serious concerns about public safety, noise pollution, and environmental harm.

### **We Urgently Demand:**

1. Immediate removal of all contaminated soil from the site.
2. Full accountability from the Water Bureau for its role in this environmental hazard.
3. An independent investigation into the approval, transportation, and disposal process of contaminated materials.
4. The establishment of stronger protections and oversight to ensure this never happens again.

Our community deserves better. The continued mishandling of hazardous materials, disregard for local ecosystems, and violation of resident trust is unacceptable — and dangerous. We call for immediate action to protect our health, environment, and future.

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PWB has failed to safely steward the soils leaving their project, causing harm to neighboring communities. Their claims in S.32 of PWB being excellent “stewards” deserves to be challenged.



LUP Hearings <lup-hearings@multco.us>

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## Rebutting PWB claims of responsible stewardship

1 message

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**Cottrell CPO** <cottrellcpo@gmail.com>

Mon, May 19, 2025 at 6:02 AM

To: LUP Hearings <LUP-hearings@multco.us>



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Please accept attached rebuttal testimony for case #T3-2022-16220.

Thank you.



**Rebuttal to S.32 - Portland Water Bureau claims of responsible stewardship.pdf**

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