

Character of the Area

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My husband, two young kids, and I recently moved to the area after living in SE Portland for 10 years and West Linn for 2 years.

When we moved out of Portland we were looking to raise our kids in nature, and West Linn, while having more trees and some less traffic, was just not quite “natural” enough for us. We found our dream home on the protected Sandy River gorge and we love it.

We live on 3 acres, sharing 17 more acres with the neighboring couple. My neighbor is a prolific gardener and is generous enough to share the bountiful raspberries, blueberries and other garden treats with our kids.

Wildlife / Nature

I have a favorite trip I took once - it was to the coastal forest of Costa Rica. What I remembered loving about it was that it felt so alive. Every step I took I ran into a bug, a fruit, an animal. I loved watching the birds diving in the water as I sat on the beach.

I was happily surprised to feel like this feeling of “aliveness every step I take” is what my home just 30 minutes from the Portland airport feels like now.

Not a day goes by where we don't see birds of prey working the Sandy river. We have one favorite - a huge bald eagle with a prominent white head we call “Big guy”. On Christmas we watched all morning as 4 eagles had their own Christmas lunch - taking turns eating a dead fish.

This spring we have seen all kinds of geese and ducks floating up and down the river and sometimes flying onto our pond. The Canadian geese were super noisy during their May mating season on the opposite side of the river, before they fly off. The hooded merganser family with their brown crests pop up from time to time on our pond and the river. I was very excited to see the mallard mama have her tiny babies finally on our pond. Lately a certain hummingbird likes to fly up to my window and say hello when I am typing on my computer.

On my walks around my property I constantly find feathers of all colors and sizes, snakes, frogs, salamanders, new insects I haven't seen before, scat, and even a white owl pellet (I always had wanted to find one of those!). My kids love all these finds too.

My daughter counted 155 brown floating Northwestern Salamanders in our pond the other day. We had been watching their lumpy white eggs being laid earlier in the spring.

We have seen bigger animals too. My husband saw a bobcat a couple of times as he drove my daughter to school. I ran into a mother black bear with two cubs on my walk on the neighbors property (Nature Conservancy land). But we know the bears come over onto our property too because they like to snack on our compost and are not very neat about putting the containers back where they found them!



I have seen the local elk herd two times since I moved here last June. Once was November 10, 2022. They were in the aptly named "Elk Meadow" on the neighboring Nature conservancy property. The other was on March 19, 2023. They were on the other shore of the Sandy river across from our house and we got a nice photo: I have heard of my neighbors talking fondly about their local elk herd. They are part of our charter of the area. From what I understand, Portland Water Bureau's proposed plant will transform 100 acres of prime rural farm land into an industrial scale facility in what is supposed to be a Metro Rural Reserve. I don't think the elk will appreciate this and may choose to stay away, impacting the character of the area.

I am concerned also that the proposed plant has not been required to complete an environmental impact assessment. How are we to know how it will impact the rich wildlife and robust ecosystem that I love so much?

Safety

I appreciate the relative quiet of the roads in my area. I don't encounter too many cars when I am out running my kids around or doing errands. I feel relieved whenever I drive back from a congested town or city like Portland. I do see a slow moving tractor here or there, from the surrounding farms, but their routes are quiet short- usually just from one driveway to another on a property, and are only on weekdays during regular business hours.

I am very concerned about the 4 year construction period and the operations of the plant once it is finished. During the construction period, there will be 1000 extra vehicles per day on our roads, including 300 trucks, causing very hazardous conditions. I fear for when I need to drive my kids to school, what we might run into. Truck drivers are paid by the load, and do not have an incentive to slow down, no matter what kinds of safety training they are put through. Plus the sheer number of vehicles will overwhelm our already narrow and potholed roads and cause a higher probability of accidents. The danger will not end once the plant is finished, as chemical trucks will have to deliver in all kinds of weather, even when the roads are iced over.

Noise and Darkness

I love so much how quiet it is here and how dark it is at night.

If I turn off all my lights at night in my house I cannot see my hand in front of me, it is so dark. In all previous houses I have lived in SE Portland and West Linn, there was light from the neighbors or from streetlights even if my lights were off. I don't appreciate how the plant will add lighting to the night, it does not fit with the character of the area.

I also only hear the birds, the river, and the wind, hardly ever a car noise. Airplanes do fly by a few times an hour but then back to just natural sounds. I do not appreciate how the plant will add noise 24-7 to the natural environment, it does not fit with the character of the area.

Different than a Nursery

I understand that Portland Water Bureau promises that their facility will be no different than a nursery but I have a hard time believing it. What nursery spends \$1 million a day for 5 years to build their facility (project total is \$1.9 Billion as I write this)? What nursery needs to truck in and out 300 dump trucks per day, impacting their neighbors? The nurseries near here are family owned and have been built by generations basically by hand and have that home grown quality to how they look. They are not modern facilities with security fences and lighting, paved roads etc.