

**SAMPLE LETTER TO CONTRACT GROWER
FOR LAND APPRAISAL**

[date]

[Return Address]

[name and address of the contract grower AND the corporation]

Dear _____,

This is to inform you of the concerns and intentions of adjacent and neighboring landowners (see attached list) to a proposed contract-grower Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation to be constructed on lands owned by _____ of rural _____, [state]. These lands are located in the _____ quadrant of Range____, Township____, of _____County, [state] and as further identified by title documents filed with the Recorder of Deeds, _____County, [state].

We have previously contacted you to register our concerns regarding this proposed facility, and have further requested that such a facility not be constructed, to no avail. We have also registered our concerns with the _____County Commission.

THEREFORE, PLEASE BE ADVISED AS FOLLOWS:

We, landowners within a ____-mile radius of the _____lands, are currently having our real properties appraised by an independent, certified appraisal company to determine the current market values of such properties. Such lands will be re-appraised after your facilities have been in operation for one year. If such re-appraisal determines that our real properties have decreased in value as a result of proximity to your facilities, we will hold you and the _____Corporation [or company] liable for such diminishment of values.

We will retain an attorney to file a lawsuit to seek compensation for loss of property values and for punitive damages to the maximum allowed by law. We will further ask the court to issue a "cease and desist" order. If additional loss of property values occurs due to the nuisance of your facilities, a closure order will be sought.

This letter will be filed with the Recorder of Deeds of _____County, [state], and made a part of the land title records of the _____property.

Sincerely,

[typed names - and signatures - of those sending this letter]

cc: local public officials

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR
FEEDLOT FARMS CAUSE PROPERTY VALUES TO DROP
COUNTY OF FORTY MILE COMMENTATOR
TUESDAY, JANUARY 30TH, 2001

ALBERTA MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT BOARD
SUMMARY REPORT
ASSESSMENT APPEALS – LAMONT COUNTY
PRELIMINARY HEARING HELD DECEMBER 12, 2000
ST. MICHAEL RECREATION CENTRE, ST. MICHAEL, ALBERTA
(INLCUDED IN PRINTED CAFO GUIDE BUT NOT ONLINE VERSION)

A SUMMARY OF THE REGIONAL ECONOMIC EFFECTS OF CAFOS

Dr. William J. Weida
Department of Economics
The Colorado College, Colorado Springs, CO

July 21, 2001

Interference with Amenities

Amenities are those characteristics that make a region pleasant or a desirable residence. Amenities differ from one region to another, but each amenity helps create a quality of life that draws people to an area and makes them want to stay there. Large hog CAFOs tend to diminish local amenities. In 1990, Abeles-Allison and Connor found that large, concentrated animal feeding operations can generate flies, odors, and other externalities that decrease land values near production facilities. A Michigan study estimated that house values decreased \$0.43 for each additional hog within a five-mile radius.¹

This study may overestimate the loss in real estate value because home sale observations were recorded only near hog farms having received multiple complaints. However, in 1999 Chapin and Boulind also found that the effects of large hog farms on the amenities of a region are far reaching. Besides the odor and gases, nearby residents must cope with an increasing number of flies, rats, and other scavenging animals. Improperly managed manure wastes and pre-slaughterhouse carcasses threaten water quality. The close proximity of humans to these facilities raises concerns that infectious diseases may cross over from hogs to humans. In addition, new evidence indicates that the use of antibiotics in industrial swine production can contribute to the increase of antibiotic resistance in human pathogens.²

In a 2001 study of farming dependent areas, Tweeten and Flora found that if they create environmental problems such as those just discussed, newly developed or arrived CAFOs may undermine a community's opportunities to expand its economic base.³ They also found that the vertical coordination structure used by large CAFOs can cause a loss of resources from farms and rural communities because CAFO facilities tend to be so

¹ Abeles-Allison, M. and L. J. Connor. 1990. *An analysis of local benefits and costs of Michigan hog operations experiencing environmental conflicts*. Agricultural Economics Report No. 536. Department of Agricultural Economics, Michigan State University, East Lansing.

² Chapin, Amy R. and Boulind, Charlotte M., Environmental and Public-Health Risks Associated with Industrial Swine Production, 1999 USGS AFO Meeting, Session B, Fort Collins, CO., September, 1999, <http://water.usgs.gov/owq/AFO/proceedings/afo/index.html>.

³ Tweeten, Luther G. and Flora, Cornelia B., Vertical Coordination of Agriculture in Farming-Dependent Areas, Council for Agricultural Science and Technology, Task Force Report No. 137, Department of Agricultural, Environmental, and Development Economics, The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio and North Central Regional Center for Rural Development, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa. March 2001, p. 32.

large and because ownership and control may reside in distant metropolitan centers.⁴ All else being equal, they found the productivity gains attributed to large CAFOs decrease aggregate employment and other economic activities in rural communities.⁵

This was confirmed by a study of 1,106 rural communities by Gómez and Zhang of Illinois State University who found that large hog farms tend to hinder rural economic growth at the local level. All models in this study indicated an inverse relationship between hog production concentration and retail spending in local communities. Economic growth rates were 55% higher in areas with conventional hog farms as opposed to those with larger hog operations in spite of the fact that economic growth rates had been almost identical in all the studied communities before the advent of larger hog operations in the 1990s. Data in the study also showed that communities with heavy hog concentration suffered larger population losses than those with conventional hog operations. According to the authors, the results of this study suggest that without public policy to protect rural communities, the most probable outcome is the continuing decline of rural communities in the future as the size of agriculture and livestock production units continues to increase.⁶

A study by Palmquist, Roka and Vulkina (1998) shows that large hog operations tend to depress the sales value of nearby homes and real estate.⁷ An eighteen month study of 75 rural land transactions near Premium Standard's hog operations in Putnam County, Missouri conducted by the departments of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology at the University of Missouri found an average \$58 per acre loss of value within 3.2 kilometers (1.5 miles) of the facilities. This study primarily evaluated farmland without dwellings. These findings were confirmed by a second study at the University of Missouri-Columbia by Hamed, Johnson, and Miller that found that proximity to a hog ILO does have an impact on property values. Based on the averages of collected data, loss of land values within 3 miles of a hog ILO would be approximately \$2.68 million (US) and the average loss of land value within the 3-mile area was approximately \$112 (US) per acre.⁸

These findings were further substantiated by a Sierra Club study that discovered tax adjustments by county assessors in at least eight states lowered property taxes for neighbors of CAFOs. As Table 1 shows, local property tax assessments were lowered in Alabama, Illinois, Iowa, Kentucky, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota and Grundy County, Missouri. Grundy County has lowered some residents' taxes by up to 30% due to their close proximity to the corporate hog operations of Continental Grain.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Gómez, Miguel I. and Zhang, Liying, Impacts of Concentration in Hog Production on Economic Growth in Rural Illinois: An Econometric Analysis, Presented at the American Agricultural Economics Association annual meeting in Tampa, Florida, July 31 to August 2, 2000.

⁷ Palmquist, R.B., F.M Roka, and T. Vukina. 1997. "Hog operations, environmental effects, and residential property values," *Land Economics*, 73, 114-124.

⁸ Mubarak, Hamed, Johnson, Thomas G., and Miller, Kathleen K., The Impacts of Animal Feeding Operations on Rural Land Values, Report R-99-02, College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources, Social Sciences Unit, University of Missouri – Columbia, May 1999, <http://www.cpac.missouri.edu>.

Table 1--Property Tax Reductions In Areas Around ILOs

Area	Amount of Reduction	Reduction In Value Of:
Grundy Co, MO	30%	
Mecosta Co, MI	35%	dwellings only
Changed to	20%	total property (land and structures)
Midland Co, MI	20%	
DeWitt Co, IL	30%	rescinded
McLean Co, IL	35%	
DeKalb Co, AL	base reassessment, variable rates	
Renville Co, MN	base reassessment, variable rates	dwellings only
Humbolt Co, IA	20-40%	dwellings only – now rescinded
Frederick Co, MD	10%	now reduced to 5%
Muhlenberg Co, KY	18%	dwellings only

Radius of reduction varied, up to 2 miles. All were for hogs except Muhlenberg, for chickens.

Source: Property Tax Reductions, scott.dye@sfsierra.sierraclub.org, March 13, 2000

The Potential Impact of CAFO Production on Regional Economies

The four economic characteristics that generally define a CAFO are fundamentally incompatible with regional economic development. Regional economic development proceeds on the premise that the wages paid and purchases made by a company are transferred to other individuals or companies in the region. The multiplier effect of these payments further assumes that they are again spent within the confines of the region and that they do not “leak” into other areas of the state or nation. However CAFOs are structured so they will not aid regional economic development for the following reasons:

(1) Constraints on Regional Economic Development Due To Employment

As a capital intensive company, a CAFO is designed to minimize the number of workers and hence, minimize the economic impact on the region. A 1998 Colorado State University study found that only 3-4 direct jobs (jobs with the hog producer) are created for every 1000 sows in a CAFO sow farrowing operation.⁹ Ikerd calculated that a farrow-to-finish contact hog operation would employ about 4.25 people in generating over \$1.3 million in revenue. His figures showed that an independently operated hog farm would employ about 12.6 people to generate the same amount of hog sales.¹⁰ Further, a number of studies have found that compared with small farms with an equivalent composite production value, a large farm tends to buy a smaller share of consumption and production inputs in nearby small towns. p. 25¹¹

⁹ Park, Dooho, Lee, Kyu-Hee, and Seidl, Andrew, “Rural Communities and Animal Feeding Operations,” Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics, Colorado State University, Ft. Collins, CO, 1988.

¹⁰ Ikerd, John E., “Sustainable Agriculture: An Alternative Model for Future Pork Producers,” in The Industrialization of Agriculture, Jeffrey S. Royer and Richard T. Rogers, eds., Ashgate Press, Brookfield, VT, 1998, pp. 281-283.

¹¹ Chism, J. and R. Levins. 1994. *Farms spending and local selling: How much do they match up?* Minn Agric Econ 676:1-4 and Henderson, D., L. Tweeten, and D. Schreiner. 1989. *Community ties to the farm.* Rural Dev Perspect 5(3):31-35.

This is important because input-output analysis shows each farm job adds another job in local communities and another in the state outside the local communities. Similarly, each \$1,000 of farm income adds another \$1,000 to local communities and another \$1,000 to the state outside the local communities.¹² However, the real issue here is whether or not CAFOs are even agricultural operations. A good case can be made that CAFOs are much closer to industrial operations, and if one treats CAFOs as industrial operations, the multiplier would be much lower--about 1.35.¹³

Either of these figures probably overstates the economic impact on rural counties. For the employment multiplier to operate at the levels specified in the above paragraphs all employees must both live and work inside the region. Given the ability to commute, it is likely that many workers will live well outside the region and that the resulting employment multiplier will be further depressed.

The size of the employment multiplier further depends on amount of purchases a CAFO makes in the region. However, large-scale animal production facilities are more likely to purchase their inputs from a great distance away, bypassing local providers in the process.¹⁴ A 1994 study by the University of Minnesota Extension Service found that the percentage of local farm expenditures made by livestock farms fell sharply as size increased. Farms with a gross income of \$100,000 made nearly 95% of their expenditures locally while farms with gross incomes in excess of \$900,000 spent less than 20% locally.¹⁵

Confined animal production can occasionally benefit local grain sellers, but only when it consumes all the grain produced in the county. If the county has to export even one bushel of grain, all the grain in the county will have to be priced at a lower level that will enable the grain to compete in the export market.¹⁶

(2) Constraints on Regional Economic Development Due To Taxes

Federal, state and local taxes are levied on taxable amounts calculated on federal returns. The numerous tax write-offs that are possible because CAFOs are sometimes treated as industries and, at other times, treated as farms, significantly decrease the amounts of taxes paid locally. At the same time the operations of the CAFO create social, health and traffic costs that the local government must finance. The local government, in turn, must rely on increased taxes to pay these CAFO-induced costs--and this can decrease other economic activity in the region.

¹² Sporleder, T. 1997. Ohio Food Income enhancement program. Agricultural, Environmental, and Development Economics Department, Ohio State University, Columbus, p. 9.

¹³ RIMS II, Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, Washington, DC, October, 1997.

¹⁴ Lawrence, John D., et al., "A Profile of the Iowa Pork Industry, Its Producers, and Implications for the Future," Staff Paper No. 253, Department Of Economics, Iowa State University, 1994.

¹⁵ Chism, John, and Levins, Richard, "Farm Spending and Local Selling: How Do They Match Up?," Minnesota Agricultural Economist, no. 676, University of Minnesota Extension Service, Spring, 1994.

¹⁶ Hayes, Dermot, Iowa's Pork Industry--Dollars and Scents, Iowa State University, January, 1998.

For example, additional costs associated with hosting a CAFO include increased health costs, traffic, accidents, road repairs, and environmental monitoring. One Iowa community estimated that its gravel costs alone increased by about 40% (about \$20,000 per year) due to truck traffic to hog CAFOs with 45,000 finishing hogs. Annual estimated costs of a 20,000 head feedlot on local roadways were \$6,447 per mile due to truck traffic.¹⁷ Colorado counties that have experienced increases in livestock operations have also reported increases in the costs of roads, but specific dollar values are not available.¹⁸ In addition, an Iowa study found that while some agricultural land values increased due to an increased demand for “spreadable acreage,” total assessed property value, including residential, fell in proximity to hog operations.¹⁹

(3) Constraints on Regional Economic Development Due To Vertical Integration

Vertical integration requires purchases from and sales to other members of the vertically integrated company, not from local producers and suppliers. Thus, vertically integrated companies stimulate regional economies only to the extent that all elements of the company are located in the region. Historically, this factor has severely limited the economic impact of CAFOs on the regions in which they are situated. For example, Lawrence found that in Iowa smaller hog operations (less than 700 head annually) purchased 69 percent of their feed within 10 miles of the operation. Large hog operations (2,000 or more hogs per year) that are more likely to be vertically integrated only purchased 42 percent of their feed within 10 miles of the operation.²⁰

Tweeten and Flora also find that consolidation affects the ability of small producers to respond to shifting demand by entering or leaving markets. Large CAFOs tend to have higher overhead costs (fixed costs for facilities and equipment) than operating costs (variable costs for labor and feed). This means that in hog CAFOs, large buildings must be kept full in order to minimize cost/unit and in the face of falling prices, large CAFOs will increase production because it lowers their overall cost to produce each pig.

Conversely, conventional operations have lower fixed costs and higher variable costs. These operations will reduce their production in a time of falling prices. Thus, in the past, the burden of adjusting hog supply to weak demand has fallen on small producers and it has driven most of them out of the market.²¹ The demise of the majority of small producers has created a dilemma for large hog CAFOs because it signals an end to the period when overproduction by large producers can be absorbed by forcing small producers out of the market. To address this problem, large hog agribusiness appears to be creating another class of small farmers – contract operators – who can be cut out of the market when demand falls. Since the fate of these individuals is entirely in the hands of large agribusiness concerns, it will be easy to quickly create slack in the markets when

¹⁷ Duncan, M.R., Taylor, R.D., Saxowsky, D.M., and Koo, W.W., “Economic Feasibility of the Cattle Feeding Industry in the Northern Plains and Western Lakes States,” Agricultural Economic Report No. 370, Department of Agricultural Economics, North Dakota State University, 1997.

¹⁸ Park et al., op. cit.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Lawrence et al., op. cit.

²¹ Tweeten, Luther G. and Flora, Op. Cit., p. 32.

hog prices fall by simply canceling contracts and removing hogs from the contract producers.

(4) Constraints on Regional Economic Development Due To Cost Shifting

The previous three sections have described the reasons inherent in the structure of CAFOs that most of the money from a CAFO will either be directly spent outside the region or it will quickly migrate there. However, through cost shifting the CAFO will also leave the costs of its odor, health risks, surface water pollution, ground water pollution and in the long run, its abandoned lagoons and facilities for the region to deal with. For example, these costs may arise from:

(1) The Cost of Odor From Injecting or Broad-Casting Manure

Actual field tests on injection odor were conducted in Iowa in 1998 by Iowa State University. The researchers found that injecting manure resulted in odor reductions of as little as 50% and never greater than 75% compared to broad-cast applications (application by sprinkler – the highest odor option).²² Thus, injection of manure can be accompanied by substantial odor.

(2) The Cost of Groundwater Contamination From Manure

Ruhl studied earthen basins with above-grade, earth-walled embankments and compacted clay liners. The hog basins held a manure-water mixture from a 5,000 pig gestation barn. Monitoring systems were installed below the compacted clay liners both in the sides and the bottom of the basin. Seepage from the basin ranged from 400-2,200 gallons per day except during one month and three month periods when seepage ranged from 3,800 to 6,200 gallons per day. Seepage flow in areal units ranged from .025 to .43 inches/day. Except during the first three months when the basin was filling, seepage flow was greater through the sidewalls than through the bottom of the basin. The seepage had concentrations of 11 to 100 mg/L of chloride, 2.58 mg/L or less of ammonium-N, 25.7 mg/L or less of nitrate-N, and organic-N concentrations of .92 mg/L or less. Nitrate-N concentrations in the seepage exceeded the US Environmental Protection Agency drinking water standard of 10 mg/L in 17 of 22 samples.²³

Injection of liquid manure is only acceptable in areas where pathways to the underlying groundwater do not exist. Improperly closed wells are a likely source of groundwater contamination. For example, based on a number of scientific studies, the US Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Waste Management Field Handbook states specifically that

(n) Presence of abandoned wells and other relics of past use

The site and its history should be surveyed for evidence of past use that may require special design considerations... If an abandoned well exists on the site,

²² Powers, W. J., " Strategies to Reduce Odors During Land Application", Odor Control for Livestock Systems, Department of Animal Science, Iowa State University, Ames 50011-3150, 1999, p. 171, 174.

²³ Ruhl, James F. "Quantity and Quality of Seepage from Two Earthen Basins Used to Store Livestock Waste in Southern Minnesota, 1997-98--Preliminary Results of Long Term Study," US Geological Survey, Mounds View, MN, 1999, a paper presented at the conference on "Animal Feeding Operations--Effects on Hydrological Resources and the Environment," Colorado State University, Fort Collins, CO, August 30-Sept 1, 1999.

special efforts are required to determine if the well was sealed according to local requirements. An improperly sealed well can be a direct pathway for contaminants to pollute an aquifer. Other remnants of human activity, such as old foundations, trash pits, or filled-in areas, require special design or site relocation.²⁴

The Field Handbook also stresses that caution is necessary because openings formed after initial deposition or formation of the soil enable contaminants to move to the groundwater with little attenuation (reduction) or filtration.²⁵

(3) Potential Costs from Pathogens, Chemical and Antibiotics in Manure

A large number of diseases are present in animal manure. These diseases are not present in inorganic fertilizers. Table 2 shows that the potential presence of 25 different diseases in animal manure makes this form of fertilizer very different from the inorganic chemicals that are used as crop fertilizer.

Table 2, Diseases and organisms spread by animal manure

<u>Disease</u>	<u>Responsible organism</u>	<u>Disease</u>	<u>Responsible organism</u>
Bacterial		Viral	
Salmonella	Salmonella sp	New Castle	Virus
Leptospirosis	Leptospiral pomona	Hog Cholera	Virus
Anthrax	Bacillus anthracis	Foot and Mouth	Virus
Tuberculosis	Mycobacterium tuberculosis	Psittacosis	Virus
	Mycobacterium avium		
Johnes disease	Mycobacterium paratuberculosis	Fungal	
	Brucella abortus	Coccidioidomycosis	Coccidoides immitus
Brucellosis	Brucella melitensis	Histoplasmosis	Histoplasma capsulatum
	Brucella suis	Ringworm	Various microsporum and trichophyton
Listeriosis	Listeria monocytogenes	Protozoal	
Tetanus	Clostridium tetani	Coccidiosis	Eimeria sp.
Tularemia	Pasturella tularensis	Balantidiasis	Balatidium coli.
Erysipelas	Erysipelothrix rhusiopathiae	Toxoplasmosis	Toxoplasma sp.
Colibacillosis	E.coli (some serotypes)	Parasitic	
Coliform mastitis	E.coli (some serotypes)	Ascariasis	Ascaris lumbricoides
Metritis		Sarcocystiasis	Sarcocystis sp.
Rickettsial			
Q fever	Coxiella burneti		

Source: Agricultural Waste Management Field Handbook, United States Department of Agriculture Soil Conservation Service, April, 1992, p. 3-13, 3-14.

The pathogens present in hog manure are not found in inorganic chemicals. These pathogens could be transported to ground water supplies through improperly sealed wells or other naturally occurring pathways. Studies released since 1999 have found that:

- (a) Swine herds are a potential animal reservoir for Swine Hepatitis E Virus and this virus is present in fields to which manure has been applied and in water waste

²⁴ Agricultural Waste Management Field Handbook, United States Department of Agriculture Soil Conservation Service, April, 1992, Chapter 7.

²⁵ Ibid.

- from these fields. Swine Hepatitis E Virus may persist in the environment for at least 2 weeks and possibly longer.²⁶
- (b) A broad profile of chemical and microbial constituents are present in both ground and surface water proximal to large-scale swine operations – chemical (pesticides, antibiotics, heavy metals, minerals, and nutrients) and microbial (*Escherichia coli*, *Salmonella* sp., *Enterococcus* sp., *Yersinia* sp., *Campylobacter* sp., *Cryptosporidium parvum*) contaminants were present.²⁷
 - (c) Antibiotics are present in waste generated at confined animal feeding operations and may be available for transport into surface and ground water.²⁸

(4) The costs of closing hog lagoons

In South Carolina, where the state has been forced to assume responsibility for closing hog lagoons, the cost has averaged \$42,000 per surface acre of lagoon. These costs are paid by the taxpayers of state, not the companies that created the lagoons.²⁹ By comparison, The Big Sky Farming Group, LLC proposed a total remediation cost—including lagoon closure--of less than \$1 million for a 55,000 sow farrow-to-finish operation that had 160 sow barns, 240 finishing barns, 527 acres of 5 foot deep evaporation pits, 141 acres of 11-12 foot deep settling pits, and 30 digesters for methane production.³⁰

Not surprisingly, costs shifted to the residents in a region by CAFOs adversely impact the value of neighboring property in the region and this, in turn, lowers the taxable value of these properties. Palmquist et al., in a 1995 study in North Carolina, found that neighboring property values were affected by large hog operations based on two factors: the existing hog density in the area and the distance from the facility. The maximum predicted decrease in real estate value of 7.1 percent occurred for houses within one-half mile of a new facility in a low hog farm density area. A 1997 update of this study found that home values decreased by \$.43 for every additional hog in a five mile radius of the house. For example, there was a decrease of 4.75% (about \$3000) of the value of residential property within 1/2 mile of a 2,400 head finishing operation

²⁶ Yuory, V., Karenyi, Nelson, Moyer, Mary, Gilchrist, J.R. and Naides, Stanley J., Swine Hepatitis E Virus Contamination in Hog Operation Waste Streams--An Emerging Infection?, 1999 USGS AFO Meeting, Session C, Fort Collins, CO., September, 1999, <http://water.usgs.gov/owq/AFO/proceedings/afo/index.html>.

²⁷ Campagnolo, Enzo R., Currier, Russell W., Meyer, Michael T., Kolpi, Dana, Thu, Kendall, Esteban, Emilio and Rubin, Carol S., Investigation of the Chemical and Microbial Constituents of Ground and Surface Water Proximal to Large-Scale Swine Operations, 1999 USGS AFO Meeting, Session C, Fort Collins, CO., September, 1999, <http://water.usgs.gov/owq/AFO/proceedings/afo/index.html>.

²⁸ Meyer, Michael T., Bumgarner, J.E., Daughtridge, J.V., Kolpin, Dana, Thurman, E.M. and Hostetler, K.A., Occurrence of Antibiotics in Liquid Waste at Confined Animal Feeding Operations and in Surface and Ground Water, 1999 USGS AFO Meeting, Session D, Fort Collins, CO., September, 1999, <http://water.usgs.gov/owq/AFO/proceedings/afo/index.html>.

²⁹ State of South Carolina Data reported in The Squealer, ARSI@juno.com, March 26, 2001.

³⁰ Application for Conditional Use Permit, Before the Board of County Commissioners, Cassia County, Idaho, CU991002, October 12, 1999, and verbal and written clarifications of the nature of the Big Sky organization given at that meeting and during the permitting process until January, 2001.

where the mean housing price was \$60,800.³¹ A 1996 study by Padgett and Johnson found much larger decreases in home value than those forecast by Palmquist. In Iowa, hog CAFOs decreased the value of homes in a half-mile radius by 40%, within 1 mile by 30%, 1.5 miles by 20% and 2 miles by 10%.³²

Costs such as those in (1) to (4) above can also directly affect both long and short run regional economic development. As Tweeten and Flora note, costs of odor-, waste-, and pest-control need to be charged to the producing units and not to their neighbors or to other “downstream” parties.³³ Unfortunately, the costs of hog CAFOs are currently charged to the residents of the region and the regional effect of this cost shifting is felt both in its impacts on current residents and on those residents and businesses that do not move to the region due to the presence of these costs. Put bluntly, every company and every potential resident have many choices of location and active recruitment is practiced by most regions. Quality of life is a major factor in decisions to locate in a region, and neither companies nor potential residents would ever consider locating in an area where a large hog CAFO is operating.

³¹ Palmquist, R. B. et al., “The Effects of Environmental Impacts from Swine Operations on Surrounding Residential Property Values,” Department of Economics, North Carolina State University, Raleigh, North Carolina, 1995.

³² Park et al., op. cit.

³³ Tweeten and Flora, Op. Cit., p.6.

Freedom of Information Act

Anyone has the right to access federal agency records. FOIA is enforceable in court except for records that are protected by nine exemptions. These exemptions cover: 1) classified national defense and foreign relations information; 2) internal agency personnel rules and practice; 3) material prohibited from disclosure by another law; 4) trade secrets and other confidential business information; 5) certain inter-agency or intra-agency communications; 6) personnel, medical, and other files involving personal privacy; 7) certain records compiled for law enforcement purposes; 8) matters relating to the supervision of financial institutions; and 9) geological information on oil wells.

FOIA does not apply to Congress or the courts, nor does it apply to records of state or local governments. However, nearly all state governments have their own FOIA-type statutes (see below).

FOIA allows you to request and receive a copy of any record in an agency's official files, including electronic, provided it is not covered by one of the nine legal exemptions. FOIA pertains only to existing records and does not require agencies to create new records to comply with a request. In addition, the FOIA generally applies to records that are not readily available to the public.

FOIA does not require a private organization or business to release any information directly to the public, whether it has been submitted to the government or not. However, information submitted to the government by private firms may be available unless it falls under one of the nine exemptions.

How to file a request for information under FOIA:

Identify the relevant offices to contact. There is no one office to handle FOIA requests. Each request for information must be made to the particular agency that has the records you are seeking. Some larger agencies and departments have several Freedom of Information offices. Some have one for each major bureau or component; others have one for each region of the country. You may have to do some research to find the proper office, but will save time in the long run if you file your request appropriately. *Requests must be mailed or faxed.*

Be specific. When making a FOIA request, describe the material you want in as much detail as possible. If the agency cannot identify what you have requested with a reasonable amount of effort, it is under no obligation to fulfill your request.

If you are not sure if the information you want is exempt, request it anyway. It may help your case to state reasons for your request. An agency may be persuaded to provide access to records it could legally deny you if you can show just cause (i.e., great benefit to the public).

State your willingness to pay fees/request waiver of fees. You may be charged for some materials and labor; actual costs vary. Be sure to state your ability to pay fees, any limitations, and any reasons that you should be exempt from fees. (See 22CFR171.15

http://www.access.gpo.gov/nara/cfr/waisidx_00/22cfr171_00.html and Fee Structure <http://www.foia.state.gov/fees.asp>).

Keep a copy of your request. This may be useful in the event that you appeal, or if your request is not answered. Agencies are required to respond within 20 working days, but have certain rights to extend this period. Your appeal rights are discussed here: <http://www.foia.state.gov/appeal.asp>

Find out about Freedom of Information laws in your state. If you are looking for information about a facility in your community, there is a good chance you will find what you need at agencies and departments run by the state. To find out about Freedom of Information laws in your state, do a search on your state's website. Most states have Freedom of Information laws and will post instructions on the state's main site. You may also request information about a state's law by writing to the state's Attorney General.

Resources:

Freedom of Information Action Kit; Available from the Electronic Privacy Information Center www.epic.org/open_gov/foia_kit.html Includes guidelines, sample letters and addresses for requesting information under FOIA. It is also available in printed form. Send a check or money order in the amount of \$3.00 to FOIA, Inc., P.O. Box 02 2397, Brooklyn, NY 11202-0050.

A Citizen's Guide on Using the Freedom of Information Act and the Privacy Act of 1974 to Request Government Records; from the Committee on Government Reform and Oversight. Available online at <http://usinfo.state.gov/usa/infousa/laws/majorlaw/hr037.htm>

The Consumer's Resource Handbook

The Federal Information Center (FIC)
The FIC can help you find the right agency, office and address where you need to file your FOIA request. Their handbook describes what federal agencies are responsible for specific consumer problems and provides addresses to: Handbook, Federal Consumer Information Center, Pueblo, CO 81009 (to order online)
<http://www.pueblo.gsa.gov/crh/cahform.htm>

Federal Consumer Information Center Hotline:

Open weekdays between 9 a.m. and 8 p.m. eastern time (except holidays). The toll-free number is (800) 688-9889. TTY: (800) 326-2996.

USA.gov:

Has information on the Federal Government and links to 27 million federal web pages. <http://www.usa.gov/>

US Government Manual

Describes the programs within each federal agency and lists the names of top personal and agency addresses. It is available at most libraries.

SARA Tier I, II and Community Right to Know (SARA III)

SARA Tier I, II and III (Superfund Amendment and Reauthorization Act of 1986) was developed to notify citizens of hazardous and extremely hazardous materials stored at facilities throughout the US. Agriculture is normally exempt from this, but there is a clause that mandates that an agriculture entity must provide all information if formally requested by a citizen, county official, or some other body that formally requests the information.

SARA and Community Right-to-Know reports are usually filed with the local fire department, the local emergency planning committee, or emergency state planning commission. The emergency committee or commission are in different departments in different states – try your state’s Emergency Services division, or Department of Environmental Quality.

Among the many hazardous substances listed in SARA/Community Right to Know are ammonia, hydrogen sulfide, and phosphorous.

Contact the CAFO first – most likely, they will try to tell you they do not have to provide the information you are looking for. If they refuse, contact your local/regional EPA office – they should know about these reports and be able to guide you in getting information.

If they will not help, go directly to the national EPA enforcement office in Washington, DC, and file a complaint stating that the information you are requesting is not being provided. This can be a time consuming process because the CAFO will most likely fight you the entire way, but other groups have persisted and have been successful in obtaining the information they were seeking. If the CAFO operator will not supply you with information you request, alert the media and ask what the operation might be trying to hide.

Resources

Community Right-to-Know Act

For more information, go to EPA’s EnviroSense web site at:
<http://es.epa.gov/techinfo/facts/pro-act6.html>

Researching Your Farm Bureau and Factory Farms
Sally Jo Sorensen
Member NWU-UAW, Local Union 1981, Twin Cities Local 13
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Ever wonder why the state Farm Bureaus in Illinois, Iowa, and Missouri are so gung-ho on hog producers? A visit to the Interstate Producers Livestock Association may help explain the Bureaus' interest: through the IPLA, they finance hog farms! In Minnesota, for instance, the IPLA provided financing for over 5000 head of swine to a "family farm corporation," now in receivership, whose president lived in Iowa.

How was this information discovered? Easy - a researcher visited the county courthouse, where the UCC-1 financing statements were filed under the corporation's name. Under the Uniform Commercial Code, lenders secure their interest by registering debt at either the county or the state level.

This information is open to the public; here's how to get it:

Go to the recorder's office in your local county courthouse and ask to see the UCC filings for a corporation or an individual. If any debt has been secured in the county where the entity holds real estate or has offices, you will be given a file of financing statements: UCC-1 statements, which record the debtor, secured party, collateral, and other information (rarely the dollar figure, although it occasionally happens), and UCC-3 statements, which cover continuations, assignments, and releases. If a document is marked "satisfied," that means that the debt has been paid.

Mortgages are also filed in the county recorder's office. Sometimes you can find mortgages through looking at UCC statements, but many times you need to have an exact location of the real estate you're researching. This information is often on permit applications; it can also be obtained by asking for the property tax records for a corporation, an individual, or both. All such records are public information, and although you may have to pay for print copies of the information, you have a right to the information.

Some lenders choose to record debt at the state level, in the UCC Division of the Secretary of State; in some states, like Minnesota, the centralized computer database at the SOS's office also contains listings for debts registered at the county courthouses. (You'll have to go to those county courthouses to fetch those records.) Some states will charge you for searching these databases.

Sometimes factory farms will record their debt in other states as well. If the company you're looking at operates factory farms in other states, it's worth looking through the public records in those locations.

If the factory farm you're researching is located in or does business in Iowa, you are in luck - you can determine the existence of debt via the internet, and you can also research corporate filings - officers, locations, and other such facts. Just follow this link: <http://www.sos.state.ia.us/business/services.html>. You can't get the documents themselves, but you can see if they exist. To obtain a copy of the documents, send \$1/per page to the UCC Division of the Secretary of State's office - listed on the page. The office will usually get the documents to you within a week,

especially if you include a stamped, self-addressed priority mail envelope, available at your local post office.

Folks living in Illinois will need to contact the Secretary of State's office (located in Springfield and Chicago) to find out how to access UCC and corporate filings at those offices. Phone numbers and some information about the Business Services office is available at: <http://www.sos.state.il.us/general/infomenu.html>.

In Missouri, basic corporate registrations are available online, but UCC filings are not. However, the Business Services page (<http://mosl.sos.state.mo.us/bus-ser/busser.html>) explains the state's system and links you to the business entities database. Phone numbers are available on this site.

UCC debt is online in Colorado. Corporation information is online in Wyoming and California.

HOW TO USE THIS INFORMATION

1. Look carefully at the names and titles of those signing as debtors. Do these officers own other farms? Are they employees of large agribusinesses? If you're in the fight against factory farms for the long haul, consider creating a notebook or database containing this information. Be generous with this information to other family farm and rural activists. Share. Much of research is a form of horse trading - show someone your information and they'll share theirs.

2. If you don't know much about the people or businesses, run their names through the internet. Altavista (www.altavista.com) is a pretty good search engine. Put the name inside quotations (i.e., "Mega Merger Family Feedlot") and it will be treated as one term, and you won't have to wade through every hit with each word in it. To further narrow the search, consider using an additional word related to the search, such as the state, while putting a plus sign in front of each word and phrase ("John Smith" +Iowa). This limits the hits to those sites that contain BOTH "John Smith" and Iowa.

3. Another source of information is subscription databases containing full-text articles from newspapers, trade magazines, and other such material. Usually, these databases will give you access to information that will not be located through search engines. You can access these databases in several ways.

a) Visit a local public college library. Most public colleges and universities are open for use by the public, and the librarians are used to students who don't have polished research skills. Don't be afraid to ask librarians for instructions on how to use the library; however, they won't do your work for you! Most college libraries have one or more of the following subscription databases containing full text articles:

1) Lexis-Nexis Academic Universe. The mother lode: it contains major newspaper coverage, state news, trade magazines, newsletters...and that's just the "General News" category. Look in "Business News" as well. You may find that a new operator was fined for pollution in other places. Caution: if the entry says "ABSTRACT" that's not the full article. Look to see if the library holds the periodical.

- 2) Infotrac or Academic Index ASAP. These databases also contain full-text articles that were usually published first in print form; sometimes, all you'll get is a citation listing information that will help you find the periodical where the article itself is published. Infotrac can be accessed through this link: <http://gateway.mnlink.org>. Login as a guest.
- 3) Other databases are available for more specialized areas. Most academic libraries have websites that you can visit from anywhere in the world while online. You can check to see what your local college has available before you visit the school's library. HOWEVER, you probably won't be able to access subscription databases unless you have a college account or are on campus working from a computer that is part of the campus computer backbone.
4. Some magazines post some or all of their contents online; others only allow access to full text articles to subscribers who have an account name and password. However, you can often find out whether articles have been published about the company you're researching. From the citation (the "hit" listing the title, author, date of publication, and often a brief description of the article), you can often tell if the information will be helpful to you. If an article looks helpful, locate a library that owns the periodical or contact the publisher. One great source of information about the livestock industry is Feedstuffs. If you are an activist or an Ag activist group and can afford it, a subscription to Feedstuffs will keep you abreast of industry news. You may not like what you read, but it's a great source of information. Click on the free services button at: <http://www.feedstuffs.com>.
5. Small town newspapers aren't listed in Infotrac or Lexis Nexis, but if your state newspaper association has a website, chances are it has created a centralized listing of papers with web sites. Example: Minnesota Newspapers Association <http://www.mnnews.com/webs.html>.
6. Be critical about information you find on websites. Just because you are inclined to agree with the opinion of the person posting to the site, be fair in evaluating that information. Repeating false claims or misinformation only weakens the fight against factory farming. Don't know how to evaluate websites? No problem: here's a site created by an information media professor at Minnesota State-Mankato: <http://www.lme.mankato.msus.edu/class/629/cred.html>. Read the lessons and visit the examples the professor provides. It's lots of fun, and he warns you about some of the risqué sites.

"WHAT IS RESEARCH?"

"Research is digging facts.

Digging facts is as hard a job as mining coal
It means blowing them out from underground,
cutting them,
picking them,
shoveling them,
loading them,
pushing them to the surface,
weighing them,
and then turning them loose on the public for fuel,
for light and heat.

Facts make a fire which cannot be put out.

To get coal requires miners.

To get facts requires miners too:
fact miners."

--- John Brophy, Pennsylvania miner,
United Mine Workers Association 1921 Convention

Former Democratic U.S. Senator from Oklahoma Fred Harris was always fond of saying that you can't make corporations responsible because they have no soul to save nor butt to kick, but you can make them accountable. Not only should that be the primary goal of worthwhile and accurate corporate research, but also research that can educate remembering the words of Fred Ross Sr. "you educate to organize, not organize to educate."

By examining current corporate ownership patterns in agribusiness, identifying those patterns through data, research, and analysis, one can establish a framework of corporate accountability and how best to use that framework in the process of organizing family farmers and other relevant coalitions.

An essential first step is to identify the type of ownership: sole proprietorships, partnerships and corporations – the latter usually either private "closely held" corporations or "public" corporations, those corporations which sell stock on the open market.

Because the primary purpose of private corporations, i.e., Cargill, Inc., the nation's largest private corporation, is to conceal their financial affairs from public scrutiny it is often difficult to gather facts on their operations from a single source, rather it requires assembling facts from a variety of sources.

By law, U.S. public corporations must make reports periodically to the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC). Unlike corporate annual reports, designed to convince the company's shareholders that they have made a wise and profitable investment, the reports corporations make to the SEC must be truthful. One should not ignore, however, the annual reports because often in boasting about the company's operations one can learn some interesting facts.

Reports that corporations must make to the SEC include:

- An annual 10-K report, a comprehensive description of the corporations financial affairs, properties it owns, products it produces, subsidiaries, legal proceedings that it might be involved in that would affect its value and other valued information
- An 8-K report which must be filed with the SEC within 15 days after any event which may affect the value of the corporation's stock
- The DEF 14A report or the proxy statement, which is basically a notification to the stockholders concerning an upcoming stockholder's meeting, what the agenda for the meeting will be, what resolutions will be put before the stockholders, who are the candidates for the corporate board of directors and the incumbent directors. It is this latter information that makes the DEF14A report so valuable for it not only lists the corporation's directors, the corporate stock they own, their financial compensation (as well as the financial remuneration of management), possible conflicts of interest in stock ownership and a brief resume of each board member's service on other corporate boards, professional and/or academic positions.

These reports are available on the Internet at:
<http://www.sec.gov/edaux/formlynx.htm>

There are also a number of publications which can be extremely helpful in gathering corporate research.

FORBES MAGAZINE publishes a number of important lists throughout the year. In late April it lists the top 500 U.S. corporations in sales, assets, profits and market value in addition to a corporate directory listing all the addresses and other relevant numbers of each corporation in the top 500. All such information can also be accessed at: <http://www.forbes.com>

Every year, the first issue of FORBES usually includes a listing of all the top corporations' profitability (return on stockholder's investment) and related figures by industrial sector. A late November / early December issue usually lists the top 500 private corporations in the U.S., while an early October issue presents "America's Richest 400" with brief individual and family biographies and net worth. An early November issue notes the nation's top 200 small businesses, an early July issue lists the world's top billionaires, and a late July issue carries a list of the leading corporations throughout the entire world.

Another valuable source of daily information is the **WALL STREET JOURNAL**. In addition to purchasing and/or subscribing to the printed edition of the JOURNAL, you can access the publication on the Internet --- for a price! However, considering the newsstand price of the JOURNAL, the Internet edition is a real bargain --- \$4.95 per month. Not only does one get all the news that is printed in the JOURNAL, but also all the Dow Jones Newswire and Barron's copy. In addition, one can assemble his or her own personal edition, selecting five key subject areas, then listing within each subject area a number of key words. Each day when one goes to his or her personal JOURNAL, all the articles available in the selected subject areas are ready for reading and/or downloading. To subscribe and access the JOURNAL go to:
<http://online.wsj.com/home/us>

Another valuable international source of information is available through the EDITOR & PUBLISHER magazine web site. Here is an international directory of all the newspapers, radio and television stations, periodicals and magazines that have web sites. It can be accessed at: <http://www.editorandpublisher.com/eandp/index.jsp>

Specifically, there are a number of daily newspapers that should be checked on a daily basis. They include:

THE NEW YORK TIMES: <http://www.nytimes.com/>

THE WASHINGTON POST: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/>

THE LOS ANGELES TIMES: <http://www.latimes.com/>

THE FINANCIAL TIMES OF LONDON: <http://www.ft.com/home/us>

While a variety of trade publications that deal with agribusiness, corporate agribusiness and agriculture in general can be accessed individually, there is one website – AGRIBIZ NEWS HEADLINES – which provides a comprehensive overview of all such publications and can be accessed at: <http://www.agribiz.com/test/News/>

Another valuable source of progressive-thinking news and opinion on those issues relevant to agribusiness and agriculture – COMMON DREAMS NEWS CENTER – can be accessed at: <http://www.commondreams.org/>

Valuable corporate information can also be obtained from the local County Tax Assessor's Office, the State Secretary of State's Register of Deeds, the Federal Election Commission, Funk & Scott's **Index of Corporations and Industries**, Standard & Poor's **Corporate Register**, Dun & Bradstreet's **Million Dollar Directory**, and **Moody's Manuals**.

Most major corporations today also have their own websites, which can be valuable sources of information. By purchasing a share of stock in a particular target company, one is entitled to all the privileges that come with being a shareholder, including receiving all corporate mailings and the ability to attend the annual stockholder's meeting. Stockholders, no matter how many shares they own, are entitled to bring two people with them to the annual meeting (ostensibly their "lawyer" and their "accountant").

In conducting corporate accountability research it is always wise to remember the words of William Sloan Coffin:

"It is one thing to say with the prophet Amos,
`let justice roll down like mighty waters,'
and quite another to work out the irrigation system."

SAMPLE LOCAL RESOLUTION REGARDING CAFO REGULATIONS

ZONING BASICS

How Zoning Works:

A zoning ordinance consists of two parts: a map (or series of maps) and text. The zoning map shows how the community is divided into different use districts or zones. Zoning districts common to most ordinances include residential, commercial, industrial, and agricultural. The zoning map must show precise boundaries for each district. Consequently, most zoning maps rely on street or property lines as district boundaries.

The zoning text serves two important functions. First, it explains the zoning rules that apply in each zoning district. These rules typically establish a list of land uses permitted in each district plus a series of specific standards governing lot size, building height, and required yard and setback provisions. Second, the text sets forth a series of procedures for administering and applying the zoning ordinance. In most cases, the text is divided according to "sections" (or "articles") for ease of reference. Most zoning ordinances include the following:

1. Title, Authority and Purpose. This section identifies the specific state enabling provision which empowers the locality to adopt zoning. It also spells out, in a "statement of purposes," the community's reasons for adopting the ordinance. The statement of purposes links the rules and regulations listed in the ordinance to the community's values and goals.

2. General Provisions. Topics covered in this section usually include definitions of terms used in the ordinance, and a description of the geographic or jurisdictional reach of the zoning ordinance. Definitions are especially important because the general public, as well as the courts, must be able to attach specific meaning to the words and concepts appearing in the ordinance. With respect to jurisdictional reach, zoning ordinances will typically apply to the territory contained within the political subdivision; meaning the city, county, town, township, or village. In some cases, however, a zoning ordinance may reach beyond a locality's political boundaries. Such "extraterritorial" zoning is permissible if it is authorized by the enabling statute.

3. Zoning Districts and Regulations. This section of the ordinance is arguably the most important since it lists and defines each zoning district – as we have noted, the concept of districts stands at the core of zoning. Most zoning ordinances will include – at a minimum – residential, commercial, and industrial districts.

Residential districts, in turn, are often broken down further into zones for single-family and multi-family dwellings of varying density. Similar distinctions, based on intensity of use, are also often found in business and industrial districts (e.g., light industry versus heavy industry).

Other common types of zoning districts are agricultural, conservation, and institutional. Many communities have also crafted a wide variety of "mixed use" districts, allowing blends of uses in some parts of the community. Many zoning ordinances include one or more special purpose zones addressing flood hazard areas, historic properties, and other specialized uses. These special zones are often applied as "overlays" – that is, those geographic areas subject to overlay zones are also within an "underlying" zoning district. For example, a property within a residential zone might also be located within a flood hazard zone. This property would be subject to the regulations of both the underlying zone (in this case, residential) and

the overlay zone (flood hazard). See also, [Making Use of Overlay Zones](#), by Elizabeth Garvin.

In addition to listing and defining zoning districts, this section of the zoning ordinance sets out rules for the use of land in each district. Most basic is the list of permitted versus special or conditional uses. If a use is deemed permitted (commonly referred to as a "by-right" or "matter-of-right" use), it need only meet the ordinance's dimensional requirements (as described below) and any other "impact standards" (such as parking, landscaping, and signage standards; see point 5 below) to secure a zoning permit.

Other uses may be allowed within a district provided they are granted a special or conditional use permit. The terms special exception, special use, and conditional use permit generally have the same meaning; what term you're familiar with depends on the state you live in. The zoning ordinance will set out the standards which must be met for granting such a permit. Finally, this section of the zoning ordinance includes, for each zoning district, basic development requirements. These primarily involve dimensional standards for setbacks and side yards, minimum lot sizes, and building heights.

4. Nonconforming Uses, Structures, and Parcels. When a zoning ordinance is adopted some existing uses, structures, and parcels may not comply with the regulations of the zoning district in which they are located. These uses, structures, or parcels are then classified as "nonconforming." While they are typically permitted to continue, their future expansion, reconstruction, or conversion is regulated by provisions set out in this section of the zoning ordinance. See Sidebar, Zoning's "Achilles Heel," p. 16.

5. Impact Regulations. Many zoning ordinances include a separate section (or sections) setting out a variety of "impact" regulations or standards. These might include, for example, parking standards, sign regulations, landscape requirements, urban design criteria, historic preservation standards, and various environmental criteria (such as requirements for tree plantings in new developments).

6. Administration and Enforcement. This section of the zoning ordinance spells out the duties of those involved in administering the ordinance – the zoning administrator, the governing body, the planning commission, and the board of zoning appeals or board of adjustment. Procedures to be followed when amending the zoning ordinance, as well as standards for assessing penalties and fines for zoning violators, are also included in this section.

SAMPLE ZONING ORDINANCE

THIS PAGE PROVIDES LINKS TO MANY SAMPLES

SAMPLE HEALTH ORDINANCE

**HYDROGEN SULFIDE AND FACTORY FARMS
LAND STEWARDSHIP PROJECT FACT SHEET**

**REVIEW OF HYDROGEN SULFIDE DATA
MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**

How to Hold a Press Conference

(Western Organizing Review, November 1997)

Ten Steps for a Successful News Conference

1. Plan ahead. At least two weeks before the event, talk about what you want to do and how you want to do it.
2. Tell your group about your ideas; get your members' ideas and decide on the message you want to get out.
3. Prepare props, posters, banners and a press kit.
4. Prepare a list of reporters to invite to your news conference.
5. Write and fax a news advisory.
6. Write the statement you plan to make at the press conference.
7. Finalize all details. Write a news release.
8. Call reporters the day before the press conference to remind them of the event.
9. On the day of the conference, arrive early to situate speakers, organize materials, etc.
10. After the conference is over, hand-deliver copies of your news release and statements to reporters who didn't show up. If hand-delivering is impossible, fax the release.

A press conference is a presentation of information to the media. You decide what information to present, how to present it, and who presents it. It is an opportunity to get your story on TV, radio or in the paper.

Before you plan a press conference, be very clear about your goals. This will help you do a better job of planning the press conference. Some good reasons for holding a press conference:

- to get publicity about your efforts or the issue;
- to send a message to a decision maker about what you want;
- to get more people involved in your organization;
- to develop your members' skills;
- to show your strength.

Whatever your goals, you need something newsworthy to announce, reveal, or discuss at a press conference.

Setting Up A Press Conference

Once you have a clear statement of your goals, decide what message you want to deliver through the media. It may be your demands to a decision maker (someone who has the power to give you what you want); what people should know about the issue; information about what people can do to help; or the date, time and place of your next action.

Work out the location of the press conference. Find an appropriate place that is convenient and has the facilities you need. Dramatize your position by choosing a good backdrop. If you hold the press conference indoors, provide technical assistance for reporters, such as phones, microphones, enough light, etc.

Set a date and time for the conference, taking into account reporters' deadlines. Check for competing news events scheduled at the time of your conference.

Invite the media. Send a press advisory to media outlets at least a week before the press conference. Follow up with a phone call to make sure that everyone received the advisory. Call them the day before to remind them about the event.

Invite guests. Make phone calls and send written invitations to those you want to have at the press conference, such as other members of your group, allies, and friendly politicians.

Prepare your spokesperson(s) to deliver your message. Generally, it's good to have just one or two speakers during a press conference so people don't talk on top of each other, or mix the message. Rehearse with the speaker(s) to make statements brief and clear and usually no longer than ten minutes. The spokesperson should be experienced in the subject so s/he will be able to respond to questions after the statement.

Often reporters will want to interview the spokesperson. Let the press know that the speaker is available after the press conference. Prepare your speaker with 30-second answers for radio or TV, and quotable messages for print reporters. Help your speaker practice with a video camera or tape recorder.

Choose a moderator (facilitator) for the press conference. You will need a person to control the process and keep reporters on the subject. If someone goes off the subject, the moderator can return the focus by saying such things as: "That's an interesting point, but we are here today to discuss..."

Prepare background materials for reporters and guests, with a written statement or press releases, fact sheets and graphics.

Practice roles with your group. Everyone should understand his/her role in the event. Think about what will happen all the way through, and how it will look to reporters. What if reporters ask a non-spokesperson member a question? What if your opponents show up and heckle?

Prepare visual aids. Charts, maps, pictures or props help deliver the message.

Running the Press Conference

Be ready to welcome TV reporters 15 minutes early (they need time to set up their equipment). Meet everyone at the door and ask them to sign in (you may need their addresses for the next event). Give them background material and the press statement.

Start the conference as close to on time as possible and certainly not more than ten minutes after the scheduled time, to respect those who came on time.

The moderator should welcome everyone and briefly introduce the speaker(s). Remember that statements shouldn't be longer than 10-15 minutes. After the speakers are finished, ask for questions. Make your answers simple, brief, and pointed. A little bit of humor will also enliven the press conference. Good visual aids make your story more interesting, so be creative.

The moderator should end the press conference before things drag out too long. After your important points are made, step in and conclude the proceeding. Thank everyone for coming and offer additional information they can get in your office. Thank them for keeping readers, viewers, and listeners informed about this important community problem.

Making Your Statement

Think through how you can get your message across through the statement and the set up of the press conference. You can design your impact differently for TV, radio or print reporters.

Television: visual impact

- Think: "How can we set up to give reporters a good picture?"
- Seat speakers close in front so they all fit in the picture.
- Seat the audience close to the speakers so they are in the picture. It's good to have children or others who show the diversity of your group on camera.
- Display posters or banners with your group's name, issue and demands written on them.
- Bring props (jars of murky water, gas masks, etc.).
- Plan to have action during the conference with movement, lots of people and signs to dramatize your message.

Radio: audio impact

- Ask "What sounds would interest radio reporters? What can we do to make things technically suitable for broadcast?"
- Radio reporters need uncluttered sound with good acoustics and minimal background noise.
- Have a designated, well-prepared spokesperson(s) so everyone is not talking at once.
- Have a prepared statement so the main points can be made clearly. It sounds better if it doesn't sound like you're reading it! Practice making a statement from notes.
- Only the designated spokesperson(s) should speak to the media during the press conference.
- Singing or chanting make great sound.

- If you're holding the press conference at a rally or event with a lot of people and noise, set up a quiet space away from the action for interviews.

Print media: verbal impact

- Ask: "What would we want if we were newspaper reporters?"
- Provide a press packet with background material.
- Pass out copies of press statements.
- Use simple, powerful, quotable lines when speaking.
- Don't say anything you can't back up with facts. If something is not a proven fact, but you are sure it is true, preface the statement by saying such things as, "in my opinion" or "we believe...".
- Don't bring up anything you are not prepared to discuss. If you are asked questions that you don't want to talk about, say "We're not ready to discuss that matter at this time," or "Our group has not yet taken a position on that."

The Checklist

A press conference should be both fun and serious. Don't spoil the fun; be ready to enjoy the high-energy impact of getting an important story on TV, radio, and in the paper. Prepare yourself as well as you can. Some points to double-check before your press conference.

1. Are the date, time, and place convenient for the media and guests?
2. Did you invite everyone you want there? How many people do you expect?
3. Do you have enough space to accommodate all the invited people? What if not everyone shows up? Do you have a smaller room available so you don't have five people in an auditorium?
4. Have you accommodated the media's equipment needs (TV cameras, electrical outlets, microphones, etc.)? Does it all work? (The easiest way to check it is to ask the members of the media about their needs.)
5. Do you plan to make photos for reporters who did not attend your press conference? To make it convenient for the print media, use 8" x 10" prints.
6. If your news is the result of a complex study, do you have a brief summary to make it easy to read for nonprofessionals in the subject?
7. Are there members of your group in the office whom the media can reach to follow up?
8. Did media people who did not come to the press conference receive a press kit?
9. After you've checked all of these, check them again. Try to prepare for all possible situations.

WRITING LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

**WRITING LETTERS TO YOUR NEWSPAPER
LAND STEWARDSHIP PROJECT FACT SHEET**

ORGANIZING A SUCCESSFUL EVENT

Whether you are organizing a rally, a petition, a voter registration drive, a benefit concert, a brown bag lunch, a speaker's panel, or any other event, your success will always depend on how the event is organized.

The most important things to remember:

- Develop a concept for the event and set clear goals. Some goals might be turnout, media coverage, group building, political action, etc. Prioritize your goals.
- Set a date and choose a site for the event; work back from the date of the event you are planning
- Create a detailed master task list and a timeline that includes all logistics. Work backwards when creating your timeline – if your event is on June 2nd, think about what has to happen that day, then think about what has to happen the day before in order to make those things happen and so forth. This will allow you to determine how much time you need to plan your event.
- Look for opportunities to make the event easier
- Create a budget for the event.
- Develop a message and publicity campaign. What do you want to highlight about this event and how do you want to get the word out?
- Do a "recruitment and turnout" plan. Make sure to cast a wide net and then do personal on-on-one follow up. This plan could include phone banks, posters, leaflets, media, invitations, group presentations, etc.
- Create a media plan in order to get the event covered.
- Brainstorm all materials you will need and then create them – fact sheets, posters, postcards, sign-up sheets, etc.
- Have a cleanup crew set and send out thank you notes to everyone who helped.
- Do an evaluation with everyone involved in the event and keep good notes. It will save you time and trouble the next time around.