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For Immediate Release

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Illinois Livestock Regulations Fail to protect our Water

Rochester, Illinois - A report compiled by a Graduate Student in Anthropology, Danielle Diamond, J.D., working with Illinois Stewardship Alliance Board Vice President Dr. Kendall Thu at Northern Illinois University criticizes the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) for its failure to enforce the Federal Clean Water Act as it applies to Animal Feeding Operations (AFO).

According to the Federal Clean Water Act the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) was designed to restore and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the Nation's water. This permitting process has been largely ignored here in Illinois. Self monitoring, small penalties and lack of consistent on-site inspections have all contributed to the failure of the permitting program with attendant consequences for our lakes and rivers.

The IEPA has had the authority to enforce the NPDES permits for large-scale Animal Feedings Operations. However, of the more than 37,000 animal feeding operations in the state, only 40 permits have ever been issued and many of those are now expired. Under the new rules of the permitting program 3,200 operations may be subject to oversight within the program. Nonetheless, none of those AFO's are enrolled despite the fact that according to the IEPA 52% of the AFO's visited or contacted had at least one regulatory violation.

The lack of enforcement has lead to major degradation of our water system here in Illinois. According to the IEPA nearly 85% of the total public lake acreage in Illinois is impaired. Agriculture, including the growth of large-scale livestock operations, is known to be the leading cause of such impairments.

Executive Director of the Illinois Stewardship Alliance Gayle Keiser says, "The failure of the IEPA is a failure to protect the citizens of this state. Water is the foundation of our existence. We have a duty to do all that we can to protect this great natural resource."

The report outlines a number of recommendations that would begin to repair the agricultural damage that has been done to the Illinois water system. Among those recommendations is a moratorium on the construction and expansion of large-scale confined animal feeding operations.

"A moratorium on all large-scale confined animal feeding operations will protect our water will allow for our small to medium size livestock farmers to succeed and prosper here in Illinois," says Keiser.

Additional recommendations include: the active enforcement and increase of funding to the Illinois NPDES program; extension of liability to corporations that own livestock; the requirement that all confined animal feeding operations apply for NPDES permits or prove they have no potential to discharge; IEPA issuance of watershed based general permits; increase funding for confined animal feeding operation regulations; increase IEPA penalty authority; and legislation granting the IEPA administrative authority.

The Illinois Stewardship Alliance is a citizen's organization that promotes a safe and nutritious food system, family farming, and healthy communities by advocating diverse, humane, and socially just and ecologically sustainable production and marketing practices.

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