



MEDIA ALERT

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Michigan’s CAFO Water Permit Review Can Improve Environmental Protections and Weak Enforcement -- But Is DEQ Listening?

Groups target January 21st public meeting and open comment period for upgrades to state’s water pollution policies for nearly 300 large-scale animal feeding operations

LANSING, MI—JANUARY 16, 2015—Today, Michigan-based and nationally-recognized environmental and community groups are calling for public support to urge the state’s Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) to toughen and fully enforce policies that address water, environmental and public health risks triggered by the state’s booming confined animal feeding operation (CAFO) industry. DEQ has opened its CAFO General Permit review process for public comment as directed by the federal Clean Water Act. The current permit expires in April, requiring DEQ to open up its current policies to public input and official scientific and legal comment.

With nearly 300 CAFOs choking the Michigan landscape, issues of unchecked water pollution and substandard DEQ oversight have combined to create substantial hazards to Michigan’s pristine interconnected waterways, traditional farmlands and rural residents. Organizations including the Sierra Club (Michigan Chapter), Socially Responsible Agricultural Project and Environmentally Concerned Citizens of South Central Michigan will submit assessments and recommendations to DEQ on how to responsibly broaden and upgrade their regulations, and provide the enforcement essential to enact healthy, needed change. They are assisted by the Great Lakes Environmental Law Clinic and Blue River Law, P.C.

Every Michigander has a place at the table. This is the time to take it.

MDEQ CAFO General Permit Public Comments/Stakeholder Meeting

WHEN: Wednesday, January 21, 2015 | 1:00 to 3:00 PM ET

WHERE: Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, 525 West Allegan, Lansing, MI
Constitution Hall -- Atrium Level, Con-Con Conference Room (Enter main entrance, east side of building.) Bring identification. Parking available in pay-lots and metered parking nearby. Free parking is very limited.

MDEQ CAFO General Permit Written Public Comment Period

WHEN: Written comments must be received no later than Tuesday, January 27, 2015

WHERE: Send electronic comments to Mike Bitondo, Permits Section, Water Resources, Division, MDEQ at <http://www.deq.state.mi.us/owis/Page/main/Home.aspx>. Click on Mr. Bitondo’s name to provide your comment. Written opinions can also be e-mailed directly to bitondom@michigan.gov or mailed to Mr. Bitondo at P.O. Box 30273, Lansing, MI 48909.

QUOTES

“Agricultural pollution is part of the Lake Erie toxic algae problem that poisoned the drinking water for the City of Toledo last summer. Manure management practices directly affect our state’s water quality, so this is a vital issue to open up for public comment. So far, the DEQ has turned a blind eye to techniques already exist to protect water quality.”

– **Anne Woiwode, Conservation Director | The Sierra Club, Michigan Chapter**

“We need our fellow Michiganders to speak up for their values. Water is our greatest resource, yet in our region CAFOs have destroyed the quantity and quality of our water. The public comments are an opportunity to correct this.”

– **John Klein, President | Environmentally Concerned Citizens of South Central Michigan**

“The regions of our state affected by CAFOs are a microcosm of what is happening across rural America. Our resources are worth protecting, and DEQ’s refusal to think progressively squanders the opportunity.”

– **Lynn Henning, National Coordinator | Socially Responsible Agricultural Project**

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The Sierra Club, Michigan Chapter is the 48 year-old statewide voice for the nation's oldest, largest and most influential grassroots environmental organization. Founded in 1892, the Sierra Club's members and supporters number more than 2.1 million across the nation and 62,000 of your friends and neighbors in Michigan. Inspired by nature, we work together to protect our communities and the planet. Please visit us at www.michigan.sierraclub.org.

Environmentally Concerned Citizens of South Central Michigan (ECCSCM) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organized to educate the public on the health risks and the environmental damage Confined Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) have brought to our community and its watersheds. The ECCSCM website provides documentation on the pollution in our region and promotes sustainable alternatives, including buying local food and *pasture-based* meat. For more information, go to www.nocafos.org.

Socially Responsible Agricultural Project (SRAP) provides free, professional assistance to communities working to protect themselves from factory farms and their impact on local communities and populations, and to those who are trying to reclaim agriculture by producing and marketing sustainable agricultural goods. More information about SRAP can be found at www.sraproject.org.