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Nevada Citizen's Group Urges State to Deny Discharge Permit for Proposed Lyon County Industrial Dairy Operation

Greenlighting of mega dairy facility by Bureau of Water Pollution Control will threaten groundwater with millions of gallons of discharge waste; put environment and community health at-risk

Smith Valley, NV—February 18, 2015—With citizen opinions registered via a just-concluded public comment period, the Nevada Bureau of Water Pollution Control (BWPC) is now on-the-clock to approve or reject a discharge permit for an industrial-sized dairy concentrated animal feeding operation (CAFO) proposed in Smith Valley. The Smith Valley Dairy (SVD) currently under construction is proposing to house more than 7,200 animals, endangering air and water quality, and creating potential public health risks for surrounding neighbors and properties.

The citizen's group [Save Our Smith Valley \(SOS\)](#) has requested that BWPC deny the SVD permit given multiple problems with the application, including the inappropriate location of the facility and potential noncompliance with relevant water quality protection laws. Nevada state law requires that BWPC determine the impact of the proposed facility on water quality before proceeding to grant an application. At a public meeting last month, SOS and other concerned citizens and organizations presented oral testimony and scientific and engineering information for BWPC to consider before it makes its final decision.

"We're headed for an environmental disaster in Smith Valley to the shame of all those who pushed this project through," said SOS vice president and board member Marshall Todd. "It's no secret that this community crisis is the result of a misguided economic stimulus plan for the state. All it has accomplished is to tell Smith Valley residents that their lives, lifestyles and health are less important than filling the coffers in Carson City."

SVD's application has multiple deficiencies that fail to ensure how its activities will not violate water quality standards and cause a degradation of drinking water. One hundred percent of residents in Smith Valley rely on private wells for drinking water from a shallow aquifer approximately 11 to 14 feet below the ground surface. SVD's groundwater monitoring plan includes placement of monitoring wells to detect manure lagoon leakage. However, according to engineering reports submitted to BWPC by the national organization [Socially Responsible Agricultural Project \(SRAP\)](#), the current locations of those monitoring wells will not provide a sufficient safety net to allow for detection of groundwater pollution before it leaves the dairy property. Additionally, SRAP concludes that SVD's calculations of waste seepage volumes and the corresponding impacts to groundwater are deceptively or inaccurately low.

"The state cannot take Smith Valley Dairy at their word when environmental safety and public health risks are in question," said Denise Luk, a representative for SRAP. "It will be the community and not the dairy that

will pay the price for rash decisions by BWPC, the state agency that has a duty to protect water quality in Nevada.”

SVD also appears to have ignored established legal guidelines in order to open as quickly as possible. Nevada law requires a CAFO to have an approved discharge permit from the BWPC before construction can begin. That was not enforced by the state, as the construction of the dairy is already nearing completion.

“I feel betrayed by my government’s officials who I trusted to protect me from harm,” says Kim Gattuso, a SOS member whose front door is approximately 50 yards from the Smith Valley Dairy site. “Against existing Nevada law the construction began. Now my home, my property and my life are being sacrificed, and all for an economic experiment.”

The proposed facility is owned by California-based CAFO operator, Dirk Vlot, whose dairy milks 6,000 cows and raises 30,000 calves in Chowchilla, CA. Vlot and his brother Case Vlot have a history of violations in California, including a cease and desist order from the California State Water Resources Control Board for failing to report water usage.

“Both the state and the Vlots know that the pond liners will leak a minimum of 500 gallons per day. That’s 182,500 gallons per year,” says Frank Ely, whose property borders the dairy directly across from the sewage lagoons.”There is no way the BWPC can tell any right-minded person that’s an acceptable risk to our environment and our community. Where is the oversight?”

Photos of the Smith Valley Dairy property at issue are available upon request.

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Save Our Smith Valley was formed by a group of concerned local residents of Smith Valley, Nevada to share and communicate concerns related to a proposed concentrated animal feeding operation (CAFO) dairy in Smith Valley. <https://www.facebook.com/sossmithvalley>.

Socially Responsible Agricultural Project 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 can be found at www.sraproject.org.