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Fulton County Citizens Group Challenges Faulty Hog CAFO Plan

Proposed swine factory farm would create local water consumption issues & threaten popular trail system; IDOA building approval violates current setback restrictions

LEWISTOWN, IL—MARCH 3, 2016—A growing coalition known as the Concerned Residents of Fulton County is standing in opposition to a swine concentrated animal feeding operation (CAFO) slated to be built near a popular local hiking trail and the city of Lewistown, Illinois.

The Bear Creek 4 swine CAFO facility was recently granted an approval for construction by the Illinois Department of Agriculture (IDOA). Yet local residents claim that the applicant failed to provide important setback data within its IDOA application and the Department did not do proper due diligence in investigating possible setback violations prior to issuing a permit to the facility.

"The approval should be rescinded and the permit to construct voided permanently," stated Cindy Arnett, spokeswoman for Concerned Citizens of Fulton County. "At its current location, the facility violates setback restrictions from a populated area, specifically in this case a seasonal recreational area. We have forwarded this information to the Illinois Department of Agriculture."

The coalition says the failure to identify the Milton Loop Trail in the construction application to the IDOA and the IDOA's consequential approval of the application creates a serious violation of legal regulatory setbacks. The Illinois Livestock Management Facilities Act (LMFA) currently defines a "populated area" as any area "where at least 50 persons frequent a common place of assembly or a non-farm business at least once per week," and requires a 1/2 mile setback buffer zone from such areas for facilities confining the number of animals as the Bear Creek 4 operation.

The existing Milton Loop Trail system is believed to be a populated area, frequented by more than 50 people per week most of the calendar year. Residents are gathering signatures to provide IDOA written verification that confirms the extensive use of the trail and demonstrates it qualifies as a populated area under the law, making approval of the facility in violation of the setback buffer zone. The group supporting the trail has already collected over 100 signatures from citizens attesting to their use of the trail system. That information is being presented to the IDOA this week.

"Our recreational trail system is an extremely short distance from two sides of the CAFO," says Arnett. "This is a popular hiking and biking trail that Lewistown residents frequent, scouting programs use and out of town tourists have a right to enjoy."

Lewistown is also a featured town on the famous Illinois Spoon River Scenic Drive and County Road 14, a portion of the drive may be impacted. The Spoon River Valley Scenic Drive boasts that it draws 100,000 visitors the first two weekends of October throughout the drive.

The group applauds a recent Lewistown City Council decision regarding the controversial project. On February 23rd, Aldermen unanimously agreed that the Village has no intention of allowing Bear Creek, or any other animal confinement operation, to complete an application for municipal water usage before receiving a final project blueprint available for independent evaluation of the local water supply impact. The document must also state that this procedure must be completed before each and every expansion of buildings, size, or increase in the number of animals.

“Concerned Residents of Fulton County echoes what Illinois citizens in more than 30-plus counties are saying,” said Karen Hudson, an Illinois farmer and regional representative for the national nonprofit organization, [Socially Responsible Agricultural Project \(SRAP\)](#). “Illinois CAFOs are free to expand once they are built, degrading quality of life and stressing rural neighborhoods with increased water demands, roadway destruction, traffic increases, and toxic emissions from the massive barns and over-application and spills of manure waste.”

The coalition is being assisted by SRAP and the statewide group, the Illinois Citizens for Clean Air and Water (ICCAW) in its call on IDOA to void or rescind the construction permit granted to the Bear Creek 4 operation.