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## Federal Funds Keep Michigan Factory Farm Pollution Flowing

*New mapping report documents industrial livestock operation waste & Farm Bill subsidies*

**LANSING, MI—MAY 24, 2017**—Today, the Less=More Coalition released [A Watershed Moment](#), a report and interactive mapping project documenting how Michigan industrial livestock operations received millions of dollars in federal subsidies to prevent pollution over two decades, even as they racked up environmental violations and factory farm-fed algae blooms grew to crisis-level hazards in public waters. [Sierra Club Michigan Chapter](#), [Environmentally Concerned Citizens of South Central Michigan](#) (ECCSCM), and [Socially Responsible Agricultural Project](#) (SRAP) lead the coalition seeking to level the playing field for sustainable farming in Michigan.

“The federal money keeps flowing, and so does the factory farm waste into Michigan’s public waters,” said SRAP Chief Executive Officer, Kendra Kimbirauskas. “Everyone concerned about water pollution and public health needs to see this mapping project.”

*A Watershed Moment* details that as of the end of 2016 there were 272 factory farms operating in Michigan, confining nearly 21 million animals that produced over 3.3 billion gallons of manure, urine and other waste, annually. Unlike human sewage, industrial livestock waste from factory farms -- also known as concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) -- is not treated. The vast majority of this untreated animal sewage is stored in giant open cesspits called lagoons, or under slatted barn floors, to which millions of gallons of clean groundwater are added, until it can be applied as liquid fertilizer on farm fields. These farms racked up 644 environmental enforcement actions by the State of Michigan through 2016, while receiving \$104 million in subsidies since 1995. The source of much of the waste, nearly 80 percent, was dairy cows. The remaining waste was produced by a combination of beef cattle, swine, chickens (both laying hens and broilers/pullets) and turkeys.

Report findings include:

- The Southeast Lake Michigan Watershed (St. Joseph, Black-Macatawa, Kalamazoo, Upper Grand, Maple, Lower Grand, and Thornapple Rivers) is home to the most factory farms (149), the most CAFO waste produced (1.8 billion gallons), the most subsidies received (\$59 million), and the most environmental enforcement actions (388).
- The most manure was produced by CAFOs in Huron County (Saginaw Bay-Lake Huron) at 402 million gallons, about 12% of the total produced in the State.
- The factory farms in Allegan County received the most subsidies (around \$14 million) and earned the most environmental enforcement actions by the State at 255.
- By district, concentrated animal feeding operations in Michigan’s 4th Congressional District received the most subsidies, at \$27 million. The farms in this district also produced the most manure and waste in 2016.
- The factory farms in Michigan’s 6th Congressional District amassed the most environmental enforcement actions by the State of Michigan through 2016.

[A Watershed Moment](#) provides a one-stop shop for Michigan CAFO data and information that has never been available before. It features an interactive map showing, by watershed and Congressional District, the location of all Michigan CAFOs with National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permits and provides several key facts for public use.

“This project is a vital informational tool for public understanding of factory farms and their impact in Michigan,” said Gail Philbin, director of the Sierra Club Michigan Chapter, a Less=More member.

Using the most current data available, this project includes:

- the location and the owners of the farm sites
- the species and head counts of animals housed
- the facility’s NPDES CAFO permit numbers; the CAFO operator’s report on waste produced
- the environmental violations incurred
- and the taxpayer subsidies received

In recent years, millions of dollars have been funneled into Michigan in the form of additional federal subsidies to fund efforts to keep phosphorus from entering the Great Lakes. Phosphorus is a nutrient found in animal waste and commercial fertilizers that fuel the growth of algae.

A Watershed Moment confirms that concentrated animal feeding operations, received nearly \$104 million in federal subsidies from 1995-2014, while incurring a massive 644 environmental violations of operating permits through 2016.

“2017 is a watershed moment in the health and safety of the Great Lakes,” said Pam Taylor, a water monitor with ECCSCM, the volunteer group that has tracked factory farm pollution in Lenawee and Hillsdale Counties for more than 15 years. “The amount of dissolved phosphorus, which is the type that feeds toxic algae, has nearly doubled since the 1990s in the River Raisin. It’s just a matter of time before another toxic mass floats into another municipal water intake somewhere in the Great Lakes, just as it did in 2014 in Lake Erie near Toledo.”

A Watershed Moment, with data taken from Michigan Department of Environmental Quality’s MIWaters database, Environmental Working Group, and Freedom-of-Information Act Requests to MDEQ’s Water Resources Division, serves as an appendix to [Follow the Manure: Factory Farms and the Lake Erie Algal Crisis](#), the 2015 Less=More mapping report targeting the role factory farms and the manure they produce play in contributing dissolved phosphorus in Lake Erie’s toxic algae hazards. That report found that, between 2008 and 2015, U.S. Department of Agriculture direct payments, cost-shares and other conservation subsidies to factory farms totaled more than \$16.8 million. At the time of the report’s release, the Western Lake Erie Watershed encompassed 146 industrial livestock operations housing nearly 12 million animals that produced more than 690 million gallons of waste annually.

In November 2016, [MDEQ included western Lake Erie on its list of impaired state waters](#) in its report to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency -- one of the key recommendations of the Follow the Manure report.

The [Less = More Coalition](#) continues to push for an end to the practice of giving federal taxpayer dollars to polluting CAFOs, a ban on the application of CAFO waste on frozen or snow-covered ground, and reducing the agronomic rate for phosphorus from manure applications to match the rate recommended for other forms of phosphorus fertilizer.

For a copy of *A Watershed Moment*, [here](#).

**Less=More** is a coalition of organizations engaged in diverse aspects of our food system and seeking to level the playing field for sustainable farming in Michigan. Less support for polluting factory farms means a more sustainable Michigan. For more information, please visit [MoreforMichigan.org](http://MoreforMichigan.org).

Members of the Less=More Coalition include: The Center for Food Safety, Crane Dance Farm, LLC, Environmentally Concerned Citizens of South Central Michigan, Food & Water Watch, Greater Grand Rapids Food Systems Council, Groundswell Farm, Humane Society of the United States, Michigan Voices for Good Food Policy, Michigan Young Farmers Coalition, Sierra Club Michigan Chapter and Socially Responsible Agricultural Project.