



## Sustain Rural Wisconsin Network

### **Call for Moratorium on the Construction and Expansion of Industrial-Sized Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations in Wisconsin**

Wisconsin citizens' right to clean water, clean air and a good quality of life is endangered by water pollution frequently caused by agriculture. Wisconsin's industrial agriculture industry generates more manure than crops can safely use as fertilizer leading to excess phosphorus and nitrate levels in the soil and groundwater. As a result, our local streams, lakes, and waterways are quickly becoming damaged beyond repair.

Therefore, we call upon Wisconsin to declare a temporary moratorium on the permitting and construction of new and expanding Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs). <sup>1</sup>Before Wisconsin allows new construction or expansions of CAFO facilities, the state must provide a solution for our existing manure overload problem. No facility should be allowed to pollute local waterways and groundwater without a set enforcement policy addressing the cleanup of contamination if a problem should arise.

#### **Why Wisconsin? Why Now?**

**Water Quality** - Large-scale agriculture contributes to pollution of Wisconsin's water resources through leaching and runoff of crop nutrients, pesticides, and animal wastes, and through soil erosion from cropland. Groundwater and surface water issues associated with industrial agriculture are a major problem in Wisconsin, especially in areas and watersheds with high densities of Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) with limited amounts of land for manure and wastewater spreading, and in environmentally sensitive regions like the karst areas, the central sands, and the clay plains.

**Water Quantity** - In certain areas of the state, primarily the Central Sands, lakes, streams and wells are drying up due to large-scale agriculture. A solid body of research shows that this loss of surface water is directly related to depletion of groundwater aquifers by high capacity wells. The depletion of groundwater not only impacts water loss but presents a public health risk as drinking water sources dry up and any pollutants such as nitrates and bacteria become more concentrated.

**Phosphorus & Nitrate Overloading** - Industrial agricultural practices are the number one source of sediment and phosphorus in Wisconsin due to high erosion rates and high phosphorus levels in agricultural soils. Croplands supply 76 % of the sediment and 65 % of the phosphorus load in Wisconsin runoff. Nitrate is the most widespread groundwater contaminant in Wisconsin and, on a statewide basis, about 90% of the nitrate detected in groundwater is from

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<sup>1</sup> This moratorium will not apply to any facilities, regardless of animal units, that the EPA has designated a CAFO in order to more closely regulate the activities that impact their administration of the Clean Water Act.



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agricultural sources (fertilizer, manure, and legumes). Phosphorus and nitrates contribute to algal blooms in rivers, streams, and lakes and have led to hypoxic areas (dead zones) in our estuaries, Great Lakes, and Oceans.

**Human Health & Welfare** - CAFOs can emit toxins that cause a host of illnesses for neighbors and workers (asthma, headaches, nausea, diarrhea, burning eyes, other respiratory problems) and can cause mood problems (depression, confusion, fatigue, tension) for people living and working near these industrial sized facilities. In addition, the overuse of antibiotics in CAFOs facilitates produce drug-resistant bacteria, which is a grave danger to people.

**Economic Impacts** - Counties with more CAFOs trend toward lower income growth, fewer business, and less commercial activity. In addition, property values can decrease near large scale industrial farms resulting in decreased property tax revenue to support local services such as road construction and maintenance, recycling, emergency medical services and police/fire protection.

The Sustain Rural Wisconsin Network is calling for a moratorium on new construction and expansion of concentrated animal feeding operations should be enacted until:

- Legislation is passed that empowers the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources with the authority and mandate to address and adequately enforce water quality standards through Nutrient Management Plans and the permitting process.
- Groundwater protection policy is created and outlines procedures for adequate enforcement of violation.
- All CAFOs in Wisconsin that are currently operating with expired WPDES permits are issued a current WPDES (Wisconsin Pollutant Discharge Elimination Systems) permit for future regulation.

The Sustain Rural Wisconsin Network is devoted to promoting sustainable agriculture and agricultural policies that support environmentally sound, socially responsible, profitable agriculture. We picture a Wisconsin in the year 2020 as a state where many farms and agricultural businesses dot the landscape punctuated by vibrant rural communities. In order to achieve this vision, we must have the support of government programs and policies.

To co-sponsor this moratorium request, please [click here](#) and register your group and/or municipality. For more information please feel free to visit our [website](#).