

Violations Reach 116 and Counting

Violations of the Clean Water Act by Hudson Area confined animal feeding operation continued throughout 2004. More than 40 discharges brings the total to 116 with several more pending Notice Letters from Michigan Department of Natural Resource. Below is a list of the most recent verified violations.

October, 2004 - DEQ District Compliance Agreement (DCA) with Bleich Dairy, Hudson, orders a certified Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan (CNMP), long-term corrections "to address contaminated storm water runoff from barnyard and feed lots," as well as contaminated runoff from the silage/feed storage area. Corrections had not been made since previous Notice Letters. (District Compliance Agreement, October 8, 2004)

September, 2004 - Site inspection of Vreba-Hoff facility by Tetra Tech MPS finds waste located in grassed areas between barns, on the pavement, in the calf holding area, and from equipment. "Bacteria are most likely available in standing water found around the site due to storm water contamination." The report concludes that a rainfall event could carry "storm water contaminated with waste materials to the outfall located at Meridian Road, where the MDEQ has previously identified high levels of E-coli." (Tetra Tech, Site Inspection of Vreba-Hoff Dairy II, September, 2004)

July, August, 2004 - 115, 116 - VanderHoff Haley Dairy cited for multiple manure discharges to Bovee County Drain at Whaley Rd. Water with "strong manure odor" was discharging on July 31 after field application of liquid manure. During follow-up inspection on Aug. 4, DEQ found contaminated brown water was again discharging to Bovee Drain. (DEQ Notice Letter, August 19, 2004)

July, 2004 - DEQ District Compliance Agreement (DCA) with Bruinsma Dairy, Morenci, orders "long-term corrections to address contaminated storm water runoff from the feed storage area." (DCA, July 6, 2004)

July, 2004 - EPA Region 5 inspections at Vreba-Hoff on July 13, 2004, find multiple pollution concerns, including contaminated runoff from calf hutches, and "apparent seeps in the new silage runoff storage pit...there is either a very high water table, which can impact the integrity of the liner, or the structure may be leaking, or both." (EPA Inspection Letter, July 16, 2004)

Winter Spreading Continues



Feb. 3, 2005 - Mericam CAFO spraying on snow, on sloping field, Territorial Rd



Jan 31, 2005 -- Bleich CAFO spray application of liquid manure, Culbert Rd.

Vreba-Hoff CAFO must install wastewater treatment system, pay \$75,000

Dec. 28, 2004 - DEQ announced that Vreba-Hoff must install a \$1,000,000 wastewater treatment system by December 2005, must apply for individual NPDES permits for both facilities, and must immediately cease all land application of untreated waste in the Lime Lake basin, a drainage area on Michigan's 303(d) list of impaired waters. Vreba-Hoff has had multiple illegal discharges from fields along Lime Lake Inlet. With these actions, in settlement of DEQ's lawsuit against the CAFO for multiple violations, Michigan takes a first step in changing the CAFO waste system to a less liquid system. Vreba-Hoff must also pay \$75,000. See DEQ press release. ECCSCM applauds Michigan's action -- the first of its kind in dealing with untreated animal waste. Wastewater treatment systems -- eventually full wastewater treatment, as in other industries and municipalities -- individual NPDES permits, an end to land application of untreated wastes, should be requirements for all CAFOs. The liquid waste system, the practices, and the polluting discharges of Vreba-Hoff CAFOs are no different from other CAFOs here and elsewhere in the state.

Granholm Vetoes Digester Bill

Last November, Governor Granholm, vetoes a Bill proposed by Senator Camern Brown that would have provided a low interest loans to CAFOs. Granholm said the subsidy was a tax giveaway to CAFOs, which often damage the state's waterways with toxic concentrations of manure waste and frequently violate state environmental laws.

ECCSCM praises the Governor for this consiensus decision.

Some information about Methane Digesters

First, let's clarify that methane digesters do not reduce the amount of waste. The amount of liquid waste is just the same, whether or not a facility has a methane digester or not. Methane digesters do not clean the waste. They do not avoid the need to spread the manure. The manure still exists and has to go somewhere. To be fair, the pathogens are reduced.

According to Missouri University, there is a significant energy loss in converting energy from the gas form to the electrical form using methane digesters. Much of the energy produced by methane digesters is used to maintain the 95 degrees necessary in the digesters.

Methane digesters are a very inefficient way to produce electricity. In fact, their efficiency is evident in that only operations that receive subsidies are able to build and operate methane digesters. I have found nowhere in the USA where a farm has built and operated a methane digester without a gift from taxpayers.

When the methane is burned for converting to electricity, the bi-products are nitrogen and sulfur oxides, particulate matter, carbon monoxide and ammonia. We may have removed the methane, but we traded it for gases that are just as dangerous.

Second, methane digestors are only feasible when large numbers of animals are present. This ignores most Hillsdale County farmers and transfers valuable tax money into the hands of only the largest industrial agricultural facilities. This a slap in the face to their hard efforts of true farmers that are promoting sustainable agriculture.

*See Our New CAFO Calendar
at www.nocafos.org*

Who Publishes This Newsletter?

This newsletter is published by Environmentally Concerned Citizens of South Central Michigan (ECCSCM), a small grassroots group originating in the Lenawee and Hillsdale County areas. ECCSCM is made up of farmers, small business owners, professionals, retirees, lake front owners, and your neighbors.

ECCSCM seeks to (a) understand community environmental and health issues due to large animal and poultry operations, (b) determine if the laws and government agencies are addressing these issues, and (c) seek appropriate action so that all of us can enjoy our rural way of life and health.

Please visit our web sites at www.ECCSCM.org and www.nocafos.org for more information. Please consider joining us at ECCSCM.

***KEEP OUR AIR & WATER CLEAN,
FOR US & FUTURE GENERATIONS!***

Also, the bill was very weak in limiting the polluter from getting these loans. The Bill stated that the applicant must only not have been guilty of a civil infraction for the prior 12 months.

Small farmers have been the backbone of Hillsdale County's small communities for generations. This bill proposed by Senator Brown reflects that his support is for industrial agriculture and not the sustainable farm practices that Hillsdale County farmers have used for years.

ECCSCM Meetings - Check the website for upcoming meeting dates

JOIN US: Yes, I want to help protect our water and promote sustainable agriculture. Contributions support water monitoring and community education.

Name: _____

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Mail to: ECCSCM, P.O. Box 254, Hudson, MI 49247

Thank You!

We Support Sustainable Agriculture

that preserves & protects water quality in streams & lakes

that raises animals in a healthy, natural environment, grazing, absorbing sunshine

that avoids the steady diet of hormones and antibiotics given animals in the crowded, confined conditions of industrial facilities

that values and protects farmland, the environment, and the rural community