

ECCSCM

Environmentally Concerned Citizens of South Central Michigan

FALL 2003

DEQ Sues Vreba-Hoff – Proposes Waste Treatment

In a major step to protect Michigan's water quality, the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality filed suit against Vreba-Hoff dairy facilities in Hudson for pollution of Bean Creek Watershed. In a press release dated September 15, 2003, DEQ stated the lawsuit stemmed from Vreba-Hoff's repeated violations of Michigan law by "unlawfully discharging agricultural wastes to waters of the state from its two facilities. Together, the two facilities maintain approximately 6,000 dairy cows and generate a combined total of approximately 120,000 gallons of cattle manure at the facilities each day."

The complaint cites 10 separate citizen complaints – **all from ECCSCM!** – each leading to DEQ investigations, which built the case against Vreba-Hoff.

The suit seeks a judgment requiring Vreba-Hoff "to construct and operate a **waste water treatment system** designed to provide wastewater treatment equivalent to federal secondary treatment standards for publicly owned treatment works." The suit also asks that Vreba-Hoff apply for a state groundwater permit, **refrain from winter application** of agricultural wastes, **perform dye testing** of possible outlets from the production area, **identify all drain tile risers and tile outlets** and the depth of all field drain tiles for any field that receives animal wastes.

The suit provides for a fine UP TO \$25,000 FOR EACH VIOLATION AND FOR EACH DAY OF CONTINUED VIOLATION, and payment of costs of surveillance and enforcement.

Several of the violations cited in the suit stem from the illegal impoundment of millions of gallons of contaminated stormwater at the facility along US-127. Other violations resulted from illegal discharges to Medina Drains at the facility on Dillon Hwy, and improper land application causing liquid manure to reach drain tiles and streams (see photos : www.nocafos.org/news.htm). The suit states that the discharge to Bean Creek tributaries of "manure-laden water is or may become injurious to fish, plants and aquatic life."

See DEQ press release: http://www.michigan.gov/deq/0,1607,7-135-3308_3323-75227--M_2003_9,00.html

Cheers to ECCSCM! Thanks to all water-watchers!
This wouldn't have happened without you!

CAFO Emissions, Flies Plague Beecher Road Residents

-- from Labor Day throughout the month of September



September 8, 2003



September 15, 2003



September 18, 2003

Photos above show fly infestation at Dean and Lynn Henning's picnic area adjacent to **Bakerlads'** spray-application of liquid waste – a thick black coating, with ponding, on the hayfield (photo below – color photo online at www.nocafos.org).



September 17, 2003

Throughout the month of September, unincorporated waste in Hudson Township brought extremely foul emissions and weeks of fly infestations to area residences. ECCSCM member and Registered Nurse Kathy Melmoth wrote to DEQ, MDA, EPA, and the Lenawee County Health Department about public health issues, describing physical symptoms of residents, from watery eyes to nausea. The situation, she wrote on Sept. 15, "is clearly affecting the health and emotional health of neighbors of this facility. It is now 15 days of no relief from these fumes and flies, (which are still present in large amounts)."

ECCSCM has called for an objective way to document exposure and symptoms from liquid manure applications from CAFO facilities.

Farm Bureau complains about lagoon setbacks from wells

In a recent issue of Michigan Farm News (Sept. 30), Farm Bureau complains that many livestock operations with lagoons have come upon a "stumbling block" in MAEAP (Michigan Agricultural Environmental Assurance Program) certification. Many lagoons are constructed too close to wells, and Farm Bureau wants "deviations" from the law. The law requires that known sources of

contamination, such as waste lagoons, have an 800 ft. setback from wells. If "environmental assurance" certification means anything, it should mean environmental assurance!

Don't let Farm Bureau weaken Michigan's groundwater and drinking water protection laws.

If you see polluted water or smell manure in water, call immediately:

Scott Miller, DEQ: 517-780-7003

or PEAS Hotline (24 hrs.): 1-800-292-4706

For fumes, stench, emissions, call PEAS Hotline, and say "Air Quality" concern

More and More Violations (see #1-46 at www.nocafos.org/violations.htm)

The illegal discharges tell the story -- tile plugs don't help, gate valves don't help. When it rains, they have to open them up or they blow out. And pollution flows...

#47 - July, 2003 - **Vreba-Hoff 1** cited for manure discharge to South Medina Drain through tiles after field application of liquid manure during the week of June 30, 2003.(DEQ Notice Letter, July 16, 2003)

#48 - July, 2003 - **Vreba-Hoff 2** cited for liquid manure discharge through field tiles to a tributary of Durfee Lake, after liquid manure application to a field for 5 days.(DEQ Notice Letter, August 6, 2003)

#49 - July, 2003 - **Root Farms**, Ingall Hwy, discharges manure and silage runoff to tiles draining to Lime Creek.(DEQ Notice Letter forthcoming)

#50 - August, 2003 - **Hardy Dairy**, Tipton, discharges milkhouse waste water through a pipe to Evans Creek in the River Raisin Watershed.(DEQ Notice Letter, September 16, 2003)

#51 - August, 2003 - **Hartland Farms** animal mortality "not being managed according to the Bodies of Dead Animals Act." MDA inspector found "carcasses of dead farm animals half buried" in a pile of old silage. "Leachate was pooling around the pile and there were bones strewn about as if dogs or other animals had pulled them out. The pile was not on an impervious surface and it did not appear as if it was a prepared site for composting."(MDA Special Report on August 21 inspection)

#52 - September, 2003 - **Wolf Farms**, Seneca Hwy, discharges feedlot runoff and septic waste through tiles to Van Sickle Drain and Silver Creek.(DEQ Notice Letter forthcoming)

#53, 54- September, 2003 - **VanderHoff Haley Dairy** cited by DEQ for multiple discharges, including septic wastes and silage leachate, into Rice Lake Drain, confirmed during 2 inspections Sept. 15 and Sept. 22. *E. coli* levels reach 1,110,000/100 ml on Sept. 15 and **5,200,000/100 ml** on Sept. 22. (DEQ Notice Letter, September 29, 2003)

#55 -September, 2003 - **New Flevo Dairy** cited for manure/feed runoff to Wallace Drain in the River Raisin Watershed. *E. coli* levels reach **7,600,000/100ml**, the highest levels yet. (DEQ Notice Letter, September 30, 2003).

**Community Action Agency awarded Clean Michigan Initiative grant
to monitor Hillsdale County streams for 7 human and animal antibiotics**

The Community Action Agency of Jackson, Lenawee, and Hillsdale Counties was awarded \$15,877 in grant funds to analyze water in Hillsdale County streams for common antibiotics. Christie Cook will be project director in this study of Hillsdale County's headwaters. Because Hillsdale County is the headwaters for 5 watersheds, the Hillsdale County Drain Commission suggested this study of streams as they exit the County. See DEQ press release:

http://www.michigan.gov/deq/0,1607,7-135-3308_3323-75185--M_2003_9,00.html

ECCSCM IN ACTION: Sept.27, **Lynn Henning** and **Janet Kauffman** discussed water monitoring projects at Tri-State Clean Air & Water's Watershed Watchdog Day at Mary Jane Thurston State Park, Grand Rapids, OH. **Janet Kauffman's** article, "A Dirty River Runs Beneath It," on pollution through drainage tile systems, was distributed by the Prairie Writers Circle to many newspapers and online magazines, appearing mid-September in the Des Moines Register, the Toledo Blade, CounterPunch, Crop Choice, etc. See the article at <http://www.cropchoice.com/leadstry.asp?RecID=2025>

For news, discharge details, odor alerts, go to:
www.nocafos.org

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www.eccscm.org

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

Name: _____

Address: _____

___ \$ 20 Membership ___ \$10 Senior

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

THANK YOU!

We Support Responsible Agriculture –

that preserves & protects water quality in streams and 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