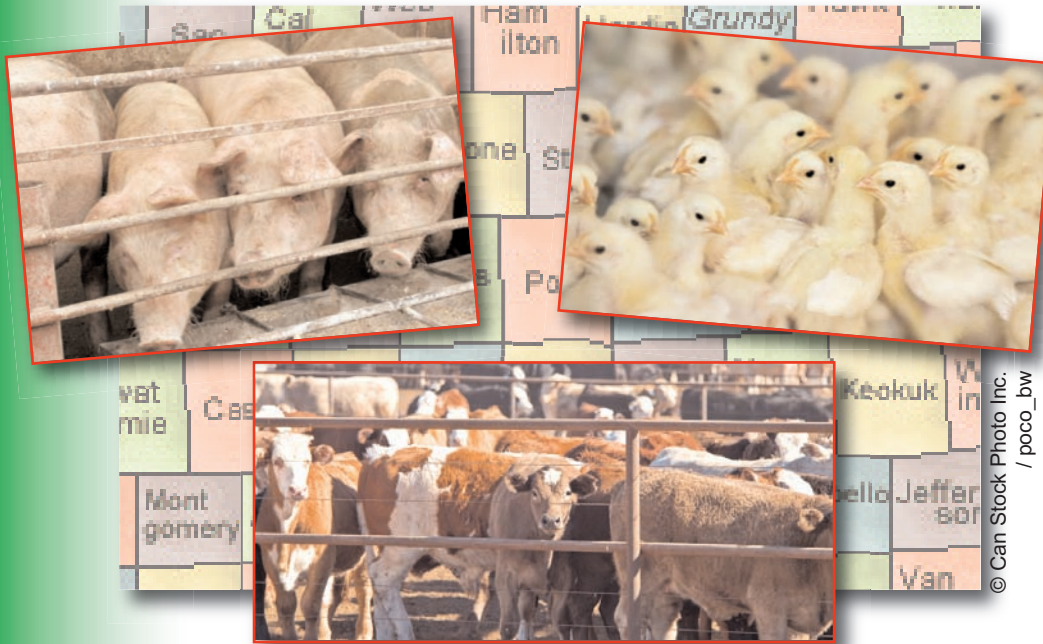




MEATIFEST DESTINY: HOW BIG MEAT IS TAKING OVER THE MIDWEST



BY TWILIGHT GREENAWAY
FOOD EDITOR, GRIST.ORG

When the *Des Moines Register* ran a front-page story [in June] calling into question the growth of concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) in the state, it wasn't environmentalists or animal rights activists who went on record against the facilities. No, the article featured ex-hog farmers who have been vocal in opposing new factory farms, as well as several Iowans who don't want to see huge facilities – nor the “poo lagoons” that go along with them – take over the landscape.

Some 19.7 million pigs are raised in Iowa CAFOs every year, and that num-

ber is likely to keep climbing. A chart of livestock construction permits that ran with the *Register* story certainly projects growth.

It reads:

2006.....	310
2007.....	252
2008.....	218
2009.....	60
2010.....	62
2011.....	132
2012 (by 6/07).....	91

That's right, after a “slump” in 2009 and 2010, the industry is back to its

MEATIFEST *continued on p. 8*

IOWA GROUP SUES EPA TO PROTECT CHILDREN'S HEALTH

BY DIANE ROSENBERG
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

A group of residents in Winneshiek County has sued the EPA for failing to regulate toxic gases emitted from livestock confinements, according to a statement from Winneshiek Citizens for Clean Air for Children (WCCAC).

The lawsuit seeks a federal court order to require the EPA to implement their legal responsibilities under the Clean Air Act in order to protect the health of students, faculty and employees of the North Winneshiek Community School District. Several livestock feeding operations are located near the school district.

“Never before has the health of citizens, particularly the health and well being of children, been found to outweigh the financial interests of industrial agriculture,” says the WCCAC statement.

The lawsuit, filed by attorney Wallace Taylor and considered a landmark case,

HEALTH *continued on p. 3*

IN THIS ISSUE

Report: State House Should Fix Waters	2
Celebs Slam Walmart Pork	2
DNA Response to EPA Report.....	3
Another CAFO for Greene County.....	4
More Gestation Crate Bans	4
Our Activities at a Glance.....	5
News Briefs	6

JIM HIGHTOWER

JFAN Annual Meeting • Wed. October 3 at 7:30 pm • Fairfield Arts & Convention Center

JFAN NEWSLETTER

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In the News.....

REPORT SAYS LAWMAKERS NEED TO DO MORE TO CLEAN IOWA'S WATERS

Iowa's lawmakers are not doing enough to clean up Iowa's waters, says a new report by the Iowa Policy Project (IPP). "Drop in the Bucket: The Erosion of Iowa Water Quality Funding", released in March, shows that funding has decreased

over the last 10 years in seven out of 10 of the state's managed water protection programs, reports Radiolowa.com and an IPP press release.

Will Hoyer, IPP research associate and one of the report's three co-authors, says funds have decreased nearly 30% since 2002.

"Lawmakers' choices appear to contradict what Iowa voters said 17 months ago when they passed a constitutional amendment to set aside

funds for water enhancement," said Hoyer in an IPP press release. "But our findings illustrate why voters want better funding."

IPP Executive Director and co-author David Osterberg noted lawmakers, at a minimum, would have to restore \$5 million in state funding to get back to average water quality spending over the last decade.

"...[S]tate water-quality staff are trying to make do with a lot less. To expect improved results is asking too much," Osterberg said.

In November 2010, voters approved a

natural resources trust fund to be funded by a share of the next increase in the sales tax.

"Sixty-three percent of Iowans favored this, and at the same time we are seeing increased working of the land, which can

exacerbate water issues. We also have a better understanding of the magnitude of those problems because, in some cases, we're making a more concerted effort to look for the problems," Osterberg said. "Our commitment is woefully lacking and there are few signs our state policy makers want to do something about it."

The report found bright spots in the interest of farmers to do more, as their demand for soil conservation programs exceeds what the Division of

Soil Conservation is able to fund.

"Iowa's waters are not a lost cause," the report stated. "They can be improved with consistent and adequate funding. The shining example of this is the turnaround of trout streams in northeast Iowa."

"These improvements took time to see but they also took a significant investment of public dollars. To believe that waters across the state could see those sorts of improvements with a decreasing budget is simply wishful thinking," the report said.

To view the report, authored by Hoyer, Osterberg, and IPP intern Brian McDonough, visit <http://tinyurl.com/85dzrwn>



Photo by Tim Fox, USGS,
UMESC, 2002

CELEBRITIES SLAM WALMART FOR CRUELTY TO HOGS

It took a video to ignite the rage of Hollywood stars over Walmart's source of pork from a hog company with documented abuses reports LooktotheStars.org.

Animal protection organization Mercy For Animals shot a hidden-camera video at Christensen Farms' factory farm in Minnesota, showing sows confined in gestation crates; untreated, infected wounds; un-anesthetized castrations and other physical abuses.

Celebrities including Ryan Gosling, Kristen Bell, Zooey Deschanel, Kim Basinger, and Ed Begley Jr. responded with a letter to Walmart CEO Mike Duke. It reads, "While Walmart tells its customers they can 'Save Money, Live Better,' the pork sold in your stores comes from pigs whose lives couldn't possibly be any worse.

"As the largest retailer in the world, Walmart has the power—and the ethical responsibility—to ensure that the pork sold in its stores is not the product of egregious animal abuse," says the letter.

DNR RESPONDS TO CRITICAL EPA REPORT

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) released a response in September to the US Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) July report that criticized the state's factory farm enforcement program according to a press release by Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement (CCI).

The EPA was spurred to conduct the investigative report after a lawsuit threat was brought against them by CCI, the Environmental Integrity Project, and the Sierra Club for failing to hold Iowa accountable to the Clean Water Act.

The original EPA report sharply criticized the DNR for failing to issue required permits to CAFOs, having an insufficient inspection program for factory farms, habitually failing to act when manure spills and other environmental violations occur, and not levying adequate fines and penalties to violators.

The DNR was given 60 days to address the EPA report with a proposed work plan and timeline to improve regulatory operations. On September 11, the agency issued their response with the following action steps:

- Commencing new rulemaking to ensure compliance with the federal Clean Water Act, beginning November 1, 2012.
- Requesting additional funding from the State Legislature for 13 new fulltime field staff.
- Creating a plan to carry out inspections of all factory farms across the state.
- Bringing Iowa's regulatory program up to federal standards by changing existing protocols and procedures.

Although these changes are welcomed, the three groups say the DNR's report falls short of what is needed to keep manure runoff out of Iowa's rivers, lakes and streams.

"The bottom line is, every factory farm in Iowa needs a Clean Water Act permit that is strictly enforced with tough fines and penalties for violators, and there is very little in the DNR's response that shows they

are serious about cracking down on this kind of corporate pollution," said CCI member Barb Kalbach, a fourth generation family farmer from Dexter Iowa.

"Permitting rules are a long overdue first step, but they will not lead to real improvements in water quality if the DNR continues to assume that the state's factory farms are meeting its 'zero discharge' standard," said Tarah Heinzen, attorney for the Environmental Integrity Project. "The DNR's work plan does not adequately address the EPA's finding that the DNR cannot even currently identify confinements in need of these permits. Clearly rules alone will not be enough."

In a statement issued on September 12, DNR Director Chuck Gipp noted that the EPA found that the DNR addressed 26 out

of the 31 original allegations, also stating "the DNR was doing well in the livestock program." According to Adam Mason of CCI, these corrections "resolved a host of smaller problems identified in the original complaint made five years ago." They did not address the issues brought up in the EPA's June report.

Gipp also cited that Iowa does comply with the Clean Water Act, with a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit required for all large open feedlot CAFOs in Iowa.

Mason points out that NPDES permits are issued for only cattle feedlots, which covers a fraction of the number of CAFOs in Iowa today. According to the latest USDA statistics available, in 2011 there were currently 4 million cattle and dairy cows in Iowa, while pork industry alone accounted for nearly 20 million hogs in 2008, and the poultry industry constituted 66 million layers, broilers, and turkeys in 2007.

The Clean Water Act of 1972 requires factory farms to have an NPDES permit to operate. In cases of manure spills, additional fines can be levied, the permit can be revoked, and the confinement shut down, providing one more level of oversight.



Iowa currently does not have regulations in place to issue Clean Water Act permits to factory farms other than cattle feedlots that illegally discharge pollution into rivers and streams. The EPA further found that the DNR does not even have a system in place to identify facilities that pollute and require permits.

"The DNR is actually promising some pretty big things that are going to have a big impact on Iowa's corporate factory farm industry," said Lori Nelson, the CCI Board President from Bayard, Iowa. But Mason also says that CCI is taking a watch and see approach with the DNR.

"The proof is in the pudding. We'll wait and see what the rulemaking looks like, if it is just lip service – weak but enough to satisfy the EPA – or a good rule."

HEALTH *continued from p. 1*

is not attempting to force local CAFOs to immediately "cease and desist" operations nor is it seeking to recover damages to children's health.

Rather, it is aimed at requiring the EPA to measure the CAFO emissions, set appropriate air quality standards, and establish appropriate regulations to ensure the standards are followed.

Plaintiffs include the parents and grandparents of local school children affected by the exposure to the toxic gases emitted by the neighboring CAFOs. These sewer gases include methane, ammonia, and hydrogen sulfide. A peer-reviewed study conducted by Dr. Joe. Kline and Dr. Sigurdur Sigurdarson published in the medical journal *Chest* found that children who attend the North Winneshiek school have a much higher rate of asthma than both the state and national averages.

Community members have tried repeatedly to mediate the negative impacts of the sewer gases on the children's health, and all efforts were met with failure. These citizen efforts included:

- An appeal to the regional DNR Office in Manchester who told them the State Legislature removed the DNR's authority to monitor air quality from factory farms and recommended they "close the windows, plant trees, and call legislators."
- A meeting with the Winneshiek County Board of Health and a letter sent to the State of Iowa Board of Health (IBH).

HEALTH *continued on p. 5*

GREENE COUNTY BATTLING NEW CAFO

BY DIANE ROSENBERG
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

A second 4900-head hog confinement was proposed one mile southwest of the town of Rippey in Greene County. Greene County Farmers & Neighbors fought a losing battle in July to stop the first 4900-head confinement even though it had massive opposition. The Greene County supervisors voted 4-1 to approve that facility.

GFAN member Chris Wilbeck says although Prestage claims it does not build where it's not wanted, the North Carolina-based corporation refused to dialog with community members and were angered over receiving a petition with 800 signatures. The Change.org petition was shared with JFAN supporters, and Wilbeck says over 100 people from Jefferson County signed on.

Wilbeck says the CAFO is one mile northeast of the campground that she owns with her husband, Kevin, a tourist destination that draws Ragbrai riders and local canoeists. "This will definitely affect our business," she says.

Now before the first confinement has even been completed, Wilbeck says Prestage has moved forward with an application for a second CAFO also within a mile of Rippey and located two miles northeast of the Wilbeck's home and campground. GFAN started another petition directed at Greene County supervisors, who after examining the Master Matrix, recommended the DNR deny the facility. The supervisors also stated the confinement was too close to the town. The application is now under review at the DNR.

If approved by the DNR, the number of hogs within a two-mile radius of Rippey, a town of 200, will number 12,400.

The GFAN co-founder says that both these CAFOs are corporate owned, with Prestage purchasing land from absentee owners and hiring a part-time worker to handle the operations. There is one other 2400-head hog confinement located on the outskirts of Rippey owned by a local resident who contracts with Prestage.

In the News.....

MORE FAST FOOD COMPANIES CURTAILING USE OF GESTATION CRATES

More food companies have jumped the bandwagon to phase out gestation crates used by their pork producers because of increasing consumer awareness and opposition.

Burger King announced in April that by 2017 all of its pork and eggs would come from cage-free chickens and crate-free hogs, reports the *Des Moines Register*. The chain uses hundreds of millions of eggs and tens of millions of pounds of pork each year. This announcement intensifies the company's shift to cage-free sources; in 2007, it was the first major fast food company to purchase some of its pork and eggs from crate-free suppliers.

Following Burger King's lead, **McDonalds** announced in May that it would end its use of gestation crates by 2022, reports *Reuters*. Until then, they plan to work with producers and suppliers to develop systems that would trace whether its meat purchases come from confinements that use crates. McDonalds said that by 2017, it would source producers who are phasing out gestation crates. This is a switch from their earlier announcement this year when no timeline was outlined.

McDonald's is only making the change in its American market.

Wendy's is also phasing out gestation crates, announcing in March that it will require its US and Canadian pork suppliers to outline their plans to phase out the use of gestation crates, according to a Humane Society press release.

Compass Group, the world's largest food and support services company, will also eliminate all pork that comes from animals bred using gestation crates in its US supply chain by 2017, according to a March 8 company press release. Compass Group runs dining operations at more than 10,000 schools, colleges and universities, corporations, hospitals, senior living centers, sports and entertainment venues and cultural institutions

across the country. It purchases 38 million pounds of pork annually.

Earlier in February, **Bon Appetit Management Company**, which operates the dining operations at over 400 colleges, universities, and other organizations, said it would stop purchasing pork produced in gestation crates or eggs produced in battery cages by 2015. It also said it would immediately stop purchasing

veal and foie gras, a delicacy made from fattened goose or duck liver reports Duke University's *The Chronicle*.

The company said it would also buy a quarter of its meat and eggs from producers that independent animal welfare groups certify as humane.

Bon Appetit CEO Fedele Bauccio served on the Pew Commission on Industrial Farming from 2006-2008. He was inspired by what he learned from Andrew York, an American University student, who brought the idea of humane treatment of farm animals to his attention. York says Bauccio was "horrified by what he learned about factory farms" while on the commission.

In mid June, **Cracker Barrel Old Country Store** also jumped on the bandwagon, announcing it will begin formulating plans to provide pork to its restaurants from crate-free suppliers reports a Humane Society press release. Since February, other companies have also vowed to sell more humanely raised pork and eggs, including **Denny's**, **Kroger** and **Safeway**.

Major pork producers like Smithfield Foods and Hormel have committed to stop using gestation crates at their company-owned breeding operations by 2017.

The Humane Society, PETA, and other animal rights groups have been working for over 10 years to eliminate gestation crates and battery cages from industrial agriculture. The well-funded Humane Society owns stock in 52 companies and attends shareholder meetings in order to push for policies that improve animal conditions.



OUR ACTIVITIES AT A GLANCE:

JFAN WORKING HARD FOR YOU

BY DIANE ROSENBERG
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

DNR Gives Brighton Finishers Conditional Go-Ahead

In recent discussions with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR), JFAN learned that the expansion to Brighton Finishers, owned by Ryan Robertson, has been conditionally approved. This CAFO, which is expanding to 3690 hogs, had been stalled since last December.

At both the December 2011 public hearing and a subsequent private meeting with the DNR in January, JFAN contested the validity of the manure management plan (MMP), as reported in the *Spring/Summer 2012 JFAN Newsletter*. JFAN Board Member Francis Thicke had visited the fields and provided photographic evidence that the tillage was much more extensive than what was indicated on Robertson's present MMP. More soil tillage means greater runoff and soil erosion potential, which can reduce the allowable amount of manure that can be applied. As a result, Robertson's MMP figures overstated the amount of manure that could be applied to the land. Thicke had alerted the DNR and filed a complaint.

The DNR forwarded the complaint to the National Resources Conservation Service of the US Department of Agriculture, and members of the NRCS were to evaluate the fields in question. However, Robertson refused to have the NRCS examine his property, and kept extending the permit application through this summer's growing season.

Regardless, the DNR conditionally approved the manure management and construction permit, with the stipulation that before Robertson can apply any manure to his fields, he must submit to an NRCS inspection. In what appears to be a catch 22, Robertson can build the new confinement building and populate it with hogs, but he can't spread any manure until his fields are examined by the NRCS and his MMP is approved. However, if the MMP is not approved, or if Robertson doesn't have the NRCS inspect the crop

residue, JFAN feels there is no adequate plan for how Robertson could handle the manure generated by the hogs.

JFAN further learned that Robertson was given this conditional approval based on a practice routinely undertaken by the DNR. When an MMP is written, a CAFO operator states what his tillage residue will be and the DNR approves the MMP with the assumption that the operator will follow his plan. There is an inherent trust placed in the operator.

Although the DNR acknowledged to JFAN that Robertson has a history of violations and has balked at an NRCS inspection, they also confirmed that they decided to provide the conditional approval by "not looking back on past problems with this expansion", but rather, placing the same trust in Robertson as they do with all other operators.

Additionally, the DNR said Robertson's practices would be under tight DNR scrutiny, but they also admitted that the DNR doesn't have the staffing available to oversee any CAFO properly.

It is JFAN's opinion that the DNR is not following its own rules by permitting a CAFO to be built before the MMP is approved. This is consistent with the June EPA finding criticizing the DNR for not doing an adequate job in protecting Iowa's environment. JFAN plans to continue to address this situation with the DNR.

Another CAFO to Be Built by Pleasant Plain City Limits

JFAN has learned that Dan Horras has proposed a 2480-head hog finishing confinement for Quince Avenue in the southeast corner of Section 10 of Penn Township in Brighton. The proposed CAFO is approximately one mile away from the city limits of incorporated Pleasant Plain.

Upon further examination and discussion with the DNR, it appears that the confinement will be built right next to a 2480-head CAFO constructed this spring by David Horras, brother of Dan Horras.

In briefly reviewing the manure management plans for both confinements, it also appears that both CAFOs are apply-

ing manure to the same fields, with approximately the same number of gallons from each CAFO. The figures on the manure management plan appear to have some inconsistencies, which JFAN has discussed with the DNR.

Additionally, JFAN has expressed concerns to the DNR that the circumstances surrounding the new confinement may qualify it as an expansion rather than an independent new confinement, and therefore, be subject to the Master Matrix.

As a result, the DNR is looking closely at the application. JFAN alerted neighbors within two miles of the CAFO, including Pleasant Plain city residents, according to our standard policy.

New CAFO Proposed in Walnut Township

The DNR received a permit application from Larry Anderson in August for a 2400 head hog confinement to be located in Section 35 in Walnut Township. The wean-to-finish confinement would be located southeast of Willow Boulevard, less than two miles south of Germanville.

JFAN alerted neighbors within a two-mile radius, according to our standard policy. JFAN is currently in discussions with some of the neighbors.

HEALTH *continued from p. 3*

- Discussions with the IBH, where they urged the agency to check with the State Attorney General's office, which occurred twice. The Attorney General's office then directed the IBH to refer the group back to the DNR's Air Quality Section. Even though the Air Quality bureau chief wanted to address the issue, the group was again told the DNR's hands were tied as it had no authority to regulate CAFO emissions.

- A citizens' letter to the EPA was forwarded to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), with subsequent conversations with CDC officials.

Funds are currently being raised to cover initial legal costs of the lawsuit. Tax-deductible donations may be made by check to the Midwest Environmental Law Center with "Winneshiek Citizens' Lawsuit" written on the memo line. All checks should be mailed to: Midwest Environmental Law Center, c/o Wallace L. Taylor Law Firm, 118 3rd Ave. SE, Ste. 326, Cedar Rapids, IA 52401.

NEWS BRIEFS

FROM IOWA, THE US AND BEYOND

EPA Withdraws Waste Reporting Rule

The EPA withdrew a proposed rule that would have required owners of confined animal feeding operations (CAFOs) to report basic data on the amount of waste generated and where the manure goes, reports the Food Integrity Campaign.

Calling it a “dereliction of duty”, Wenonah Hauter, Executive Director of Food & Water Watch said, “CAFOs are responsible for a multitude of environmental and public health impacts and make up part of an industry that is the single largest contributor of pollutants to our nation’s waterways. The failure to follow through with a 2011 proposal to gather even simple data like locations of the facilities, number of animals contained, and proximity to waterways is clearly pandering to agribusiness during an election year.”

In their comments on the rule, the National Pork Producers Council and other agri-business associations contended making the CAFO information public would lead to trespass and property damage by “animal rights activists as well as other persons,” reports OMBWatch.com.

Recognizing that many industrial facilities were evading regulation, the EPA proposed the rule in 2011, noting that factory farms generate about 300 million tons of manure each year, three times more than the waste generated by the population of the US. Hauter said the EPA “confirmed that manure from these massive operations contain more than 40 diseases that can be transferred to humans through dirty water....”

In 2008, a US Government Accountability Office report urged the EPA to protect US citizens from the health impacts of these factories by gathering more information. “The EPA has neither the information it needs to assess the extent to which CAFOs may be contributing to water pollution, nor the information it needs to ensure compliance with the Clean Water Act,” says the GAO report.

The withdrawn rule originated from a May 2010 settlement between the EPA and the National Resources Defense Council, Waterkeeper Alliance, the Sierra Club and the National Pork Producers

Council (NPPC). NPPC challenged a 2008 rule that required Clean Water Act permits, known as National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System or NPDES permits, for all livestock confinements that propose to or that might discharge manure into waterways.

A federal appeals court ruling in March 2011 later rescinded the 2008 rule, only requiring the NPDES permits for facilities actually discharging wastes.

Additional sources: National Hog Farmer, NorthCentralPA.com

Chicken Factory Farms Linked to Human Diseases

Antibiotic overuse and routine vaccinations in chicken confinements may be connected to increasing resistant urinary tract infections (UTIs) in women and the developing new viral strains that may be killing chickens and posing danger to humans, reports Living GreenMagazine.com.



UTIs account for more than 8 million health visits each year, and doctors are finding more cases of UTIs are requiring several rounds of different antibiotics. A strong genetic connection exists between the bacteria in human patients and the strains found in poultry on its way to the supermarket.

“The researchers contend that poultry – especially chicken – is the bridge that allows resistant bacteria to move to humans...sparking infections when conditions are right,” wrote Maryn McKenna in *The Atlantic*.

Flu vaccinations are also on the rise in factory farms, generating concern among scientists that “genetic drift” may be caus-

ing mutations and emerging new strains that could pose serious harm to humans. As seen with the swine flu outbreak in the late 1990s, consolidating large numbers of animals aggravates the situation.

Science Now recently reported that two vaccinations for chickens on factory farms may have recombined to form a stronger virus that is sickening and sometimes killing chickens.

Additional source: MotherJones.com

Nearly 300 Missourians Settle Case with Premium Standard

A nuisance lawsuit brought by 287 Missouri plaintiffs against Premium Standard Farms was settled in August according to a Premium Standard Farms statement and YahooNews.com. The settlement resolved legal cases over toxic hog odors that, for some of the plaintiffs, had been pending for over 10 years.

The Missouri-based corporation has been hit with numerous lawsuits by residents of northern Missouri because of overwhelming hog odors emitting from their large confinements. Multi-million dollar settlements have resulted, such as the \$11 award to 15 northwestern Missouri residents in 2010. Premium Standard threatened at that time that continued lawsuits could force the corporation to relocate out of state.

A major factor in the settlement involves Premium Standard’s implementation of additional odor control systems, including barn scrapers, in many of its confinements, as a result of Consent Judgments with the Missouri Attorney General in 2010. The company spent tens of millions of dollars on instituting the systems.

“The settlement...represents the culmination of a long battle. After four grueling trials over the past six years alone, we were prepared to litigate each claim, but this agreement hammered out between the parties is a fair and just resolution of what not long ago seemed to be in irresolvable dispute,” said Stephen A. Weiss, co-lead counsel for the plaintiffs in a Premium Standard statement.

Details of the settlement are confidential.

Additional source: StJosephPost.com

EPA Will Continue Flyovers to Monitor CAFOs

The EPA announced recently that it will continue flyover inspection and aerial photography of Iowa's beef feedlots, looking for runoff that violates the Clean Water Act, reports *Iowa Farmer Today*.

Stephan Pollard, AFO/CAFO enforcement coordinator for the EPA, said the flights will focus on higher-density facilities and that they usually take place in the spring and fall, the wettest times of year. If a runoff issue is located, an on-ground inspection to take samples of discharges will take place, and the producer will be responsible for fixing the problem to comply with federal and state laws.

A discharge is defined as "any pollutant that ends up in a [United States] waterway, such as a stream, river or lake, that has running water for at least three months a year." Clean Water Act permits are only required for beef feedlots in Iowa, comprising less than 5% of all factory farms in the state.

Chuck Gipp New DNR Director

Assistant DNR Director Chuck Gipp, a former member of Iowa's Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS) and former House Majority Leader (R-Decorah), has replaced Roger Lande as the Director of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) reports an

Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement (CCI) press release. Governor Terry Branstad made the appointment less than a week after Lande resigned.

The appointment was expected; Gipp, a former dairy farmer, was moved into the number two slot at the DNR from IDALS in December 2010. At IDALS, he was the Director of Soil Conservation. Prior to that, Gipp spent 17 years in the state legislature.

Gipp's appointment has received mixed reviews. Marian Riggs Gelb, former director of the nonprofit Iowa Environmental Council commented in a *Des Moines Register* article, "His experience with ag and land stewardship would allow the two departments to work more closely together, which would be a good thing for the state of Iowa. He has a good understanding of the department's mission, and I would suspect he will carry out that mission."

CCI disagrees. Gipp was named one of the Factory Farm Four by CCI, along with Sen. Mary Kramer, Rep. Christopher Rants, and Sen. Stewart Iverson, in 2001 because of his voting record to reduce and rollback citizen input and public oversight over the corporate factory farm industry. CCI says these votes include:

- A yes for HR 519 in 1995, the bill that eliminated local control and paved the way for factory farm expansion in Iowa.
- Votes in 1997 and 1998 to roll back clean air rules, strip the DNR of its power to write ambient air quality standards,

strengthen nuisance lawsuit protections for corporations, and expand the industry's ability to build factory farms in environmentally sensitive areas like flood plains and on karst soil.

- A yes for legislation in 2003 that created a weak regulatory framework for air quality standards.

- Votes in 2005 for legislation that made it harder to refer habitual factory farm polluters to the Attorney General and for legislation that obstructed DNR rulemaking by making it easier for large corporations to stop or stall rulemaking.

- A thumbs up in 2006 for legislation that would have gutted the DNR's authority to deny or modify a factory farm construction permit or manure management plan, (later vetoed by Governor Vilsack); empower the state legislature to stop or stall executive branch rulemaking; weaken manure management laws; and discourage and penalize citizens from bringing too many nuisance lawsuits against factory farms, which also didn't pass.

- Yes on a \$23 million taxpayer-funded odor study bill in 2008 that substituted for instituting air pollution rules proposed five years earlier and was already thoroughly studied. The bill passed but funding was never appropriated.

Gipp said he intends to maintain the current DNR staff and not make any significant changes. He plans to remain at the DNR throughout Branstad's term of office.

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CAFO-building ways, with 91 permits issued [through early June of] this year. And remember, these are not small facilities; according to the *Register*, each facility contains around 4,400 hogs in two buildings.

Looking at these numbers, it's easy to wonder: How much longer can the state (or the region for that matter) handle this kind of growth? When the nonprofit advocacy group Food and Water Watch created [a] Factory Farm Map back in 2007, Iowa was already one of the states most saturated with CAFOs. According to the chart, over 500 CAFOs may have been built since then. Of course not all that growth has to mean new operations – some permits may be for the expansion of preexisting buildings – but if even half that number resulted in new facilities, it's a cause for concern.

Some of the manure created in these facilities gets spread on farm fields, which do absorb a portion of the nitrogen (while the rest erodes into waterways, leaches into the groundwater, and – ultimately – adds nitrous oxide (N₂O), a dangerous greenhouse gas, to the atmosphere). I won't even get into the number of antibiotics and other drugs each CAFO requires – both to boost the animals' growth and to keep them from getting sick in crowded facilities. The bottom line is that the more CAFOs are built, the further out of balance the ratio of manure-to-farm-field becomes. In addition, the *Register* article points out that “such large-scale spreading of liquid manure is vulnerable to spills and tank ruptures.”

Eyes on the Prize

Why exactly do we need so many new CAFOs if American meat consumption has gone down? The answer – as it is with so much economic growth these days – is China. Apparently, they've gone a little pork-crazy over there. And China just surpassed us as the nation with the biggest meat-tooth in the world (we're still ahead of them on a per capita basis, but they have a lot more people than we do).

Another recent article in the *Iowa Farm Journal* reports on new free-trade agreements with South Korea, Colombia, and Panama, but zeroes in on China as the ultimate target of U.S. pork industry ex-

pansion. It quotes Laurie Hueneker, U.S. director of international trade policy, saying, “The biggest prize is China.”

Of course, there's a catch-22 at work here. Along with antibiotics, the American pork industry relies heavily on ractopamine, or “paylean,” a controversial drug that promotes leanness in pigs. And, as Helena Bottemiller reported on MSNBC earlier this year, as part of an investigation for the Food and Environment Reporting Network, China wants nothing to do with ractopamine. The drug was shown to lead to an increase in the num-



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ber of “downer pigs” – lame animals unable to walk in slaughter plants – and the company that makes the drug has apparently received hundreds of complaints from farmers about sick livestock. Chinese health officials, however, seem most worried about the traces of the ractopamine found in meat, which Bottemiller reported “can still be detected in animals more than a week after they've consumed the drug.”

Nonetheless, it's hard to see how the pork industry isn't expanding with China in mind. In fact, Hueneker told the *Iowa Farm Journal* the nation had “been encouraged to reassess the ractopamine issue.”

The Sacrifice Generation

The presence of more and more CAFOs isn't the only way the highly consolidated meat industry has changed the Midwest in recent years. A *Reuters* article that ran on [June 22] told the story of a small Illinois town that's home to a giant Cargill meatpacking plant. The (oddly upbeat) article details the way the town has been flooded with an influx of people from Africa and Latin America – some on a

legal “diversity visa lottery.”

If you've read any of the recent coverage of the meatpacking industry's treatment of its workers – such as last year's groundbreaking coverage of a Minnesota-based Hormel factory, or my recent post about workers throughout the food chain – you know that it's a brutal, often inhumane industry. But it does tend to pay better than much of the other work that new immigrants can find. For that reason, Cargill plants like the one in the article, which is described as “a 430,000-square-foot concrete slaughterhouse that turns almost 20,000 hogs a day into meat,” are more or less changing the face of immigration in this country. The plant and the surrounding community it employs are described as emblematic of the way job-seeking immigrants have begun moving to rural and suburban areas, rather than big cities like Chicago and New York.

And despite the *Reuters* article's somewhat cheerful description of the new ethnic population of this Illinois town, it also admits to the grim reality:

Many immigrants at meatpacking plants are “the sacrifice generation” – people who know they'll have to work at hard, menial jobs so their children can rise to something else.

And really, the scale of this shift probably shouldn't surprise us. There's been much coverage of the way rural America has essentially been emptying out in recent years. So, on the face of it, I can see why some residents may be encouraged to see some form – heck, any form – of industry return.

But taken alongside the expansion of CAFOs in states like Iowa, Missouri, Kansas, and Nebraska, the expansion of meatpacking plants in the same states suggests that companies like Cargill – “the biggest private company in the United States and the third-largest U.S. meatpacker” – might just be gearing up to rebuild vast swaths of the middle of the nation as the source of the world's cheap meat. I can see the signs now: “You are now entering the Meatwest.”

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