

ECCSCM

Environmentally Concerned Citizens of South Central Michigan

FALL

2002

20th water violation from CAFOs— manure discharge from Hartland Farms into Henning Drain and Bear Creek

In the last two years, ECCSCM has documented 20 violations of Michigan's water laws by all 9 of the dairy CAFOs in the Hudson area. In late September, after applying manure to fields along Hughes Hwy, Hartland Farms was cited by the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality for an illegal discharge to Henning Drain, which flows into Bear Creek and Lake Hudson in the River Raisin Watershed.

Hartland Farms has had multiple discharges, but DEQ has taken no enforcement action, levied no penalties. DEQ documents and ECCSCM monitoring data indicate a critical problem: applying liquid manure to fields with sub-surface drainage tiles leads – very fast – to discharges to drains and streams.



manure discharge, Henning Drain near Hughes Highway, Sept. 20, 2002

Liquid manure is not just fertilizer and nutrients. On tiled fields, it acts as contaminated rainfall, with bacteria reaching and entering streams. Current guidelines (GAAMPs, NRCS technical support) do not address the problem of discharges through tile systems. Because of the ongoing discharges through tiles, ECCSCM has asked the heads of several agencies (MDA, DEQ, MSU Department of Agriculture, and USDA-NRCS) to take action, and – in the short term – prohibit application of liquid manure on sub-surface County Drains; and re-calculate application rates based on liquid content of the manure. In the long term, a drier waste system would be a solution, such as a hybrid operation of rotational grazing and winter-waste composting. Hybrid operations are better for cows (exercise, air, fewer antibiotics), better for

water and natural resources (much less aquifer drawdown, less pollution of clean water, no sand-mining), better for farmers (lower costs, composted dry fertilizer for fields or market), and much better for neighbors and rural communities.

Vreba-Hoff I Mixed Untreated Human Waste With Manure For Last 4 Years

For the last four years – until last month – Vreba-Hoff I on Dillon Hwy had been adding untreated human waste to its manure lagoon, spraying and applying it to crop fields.

ECCSCM discovered the information in a letter from DEQ to the Lenawee County Health Department, obtained under the Freedom of Information Act. DEQ officials approved the “cost-effective” system of piping human waste to the lagoon. After the ECCSCM press release, Lenawee County Health Department investigated and ordered a septic system for facility restrooms serving Vreba-Hoff employees.

The practice of using untreated human waste as fertilizer poses extreme public health risks because of the concentration of pathogens, including hepatitis A, cryptosporidium, *E. coli*, and giardia. People at greatest risk are the employees working with the untreated waste and residents downstream.

“This is 2002. This is not a proper way to handle human waste,” said ECCSCM member Kathy Melmoth, a registered nurse. “Since when did DEQ engineers take over our Public Health policy?”

Bad Air Near CAFOs – Risks of Hydrogen Sulfide Exposure

Manure isn’t just manure anymore. Liquid manure from waste lagoons can release toxic gases, including hydrogen sulfide, into the air. The gas can come from the lagoon itself or from spray-application to fields. If you smell bad air (like the awful stink last week near Beecher Rd and Hughes Hwy, Oct 9-12), and if the bad air makes you sick, you could be breathing toxic levels of hydrogen sulfide.

Chronic hydrogen sulfide exposure can pose a health concern, especially for people with pre-existing respiratory conditions. In some people, exposure leads to **headaches, eye irritation, nausea**, and can sometimes make **asthma symptoms worse** or more frequent. Long-term or frequent exposure can lead to mental health symptoms such as depression.

High-level exposure can cause **vomiting, confusion, vertigo**, and possible loss of consciousness. Risk is greatest to workers at CAFO facilities – 19 people have died in accidents

involving hydrogen sulfide releases in manure pits. See details at:

<http://www.factoryfarm.org/humanhealth-hydrogen.html>

A citizen's test in Minnesota found that one-quarter of samples near several manure lagoons exceeded Minnesota air quality standards for hydrogen sulfide. Clouds of manure mist come and go with the wind, but the odor itself sinks into human tissue, clothing and furnishings and is released slowly over time, according to Duke University's Susan Schiffman.

No air quality testing has been done in this area. ECCSCM is researching hydrogen sulfide detection devices or badges for residents near CAFOs.

**If you smell bad manure air and have symptoms of hydrogen sulfide exposure, call your doctor, and report the exposure to both:
DEQ Air Division – 517-780-7845
MDA – 517-373-9797**

Water monitoring project –

Report from **Janet Kauffman** and **Kathy Melmoth**, Water Monitoring Project Coordinators

ECCSCM volunteers continue to monitor streams near CAFOs, with funding from a Sierra Club community action grant. During the summer, we sampled weekly, for a total of 96 water quality tests at 32 sites. The spikes in bacteria levels near CAFOs is now well-documented, with discharges through tiles occurring even during the dry months this summer. Below are the numbers for 2 sites (Dissolved Oxygen – DO – should be higher than 5; *E. coli* number should be 1000 or less; **TNTC** is Too Numerous To Count). For total sampling data (7 pages), see Janet or Kathy.

#19 Rice Lake Drain at Haley Rd

	DO	<i>E. coli</i> /100 ml
7/2/2002	6.8	3,564
7/9/2002	4.5	TNTC
7/15/2002	7.8	200
7/23/2002	2.2	TNTC
7/31/2002	3.1	5,940
8/14/2002	3.9	495
8/21/2002	1.6	TNTC
8/28/2002	0.3	14,790

#11 Silver Creek at Mulberry Rd

	DO	<i>E. coli</i> /100ml
7/2/2002	6.3	5,346
7/9/2002	6.2	15,840
7/15/2002	7.6	6,534
7/23/2002	7.2	2,277
7/31/2002	6.5	891
8/14/2002	6.8	2,178
8/21/2002	7.1	1,089
8/28/2002	6.9	1,980

ECCSCM Joins Tri-State Citizens Groups in Animal Factory Fight

The rapid influx of new industrial-sized livestock operations, with a rash of recent manure spills, prompted representatives from eight Michigan, Ohio, and Indiana concerned citizens groups to band together to protect air quality, water quality and rural quality of life. The new coalition, Tri-State Citizens for Clean Air and Water, includes eight groups – ECCSCM, Concerned Citizens for the Protection of the Beaver Creek Watershed, Citizens of Central Ohio, Fulton County Citizens for Responsible Agriculture, Neighbors Against Pollution, Paulding County First, Putnam County Citizens for Clean Air and Water, and Wood County Citizens Opposed to Factory Farms.

Lynn and Dean Henning represented ECCSCM at the first Tri-State meeting on Saturday, September 21. The coalition was established to unite local citizen groups from Michigan, Indiana and Ohio who are opposed to factory farm operations in their communities.

"This coalition provides us with a much needed forum to share ideas and resources", said Nancy Mathews, member of Paulding County First. "Most of us have other jobs and commitments, limiting the time and energy we are able to put into fighting our battles."

The recent meeting gave citizens the opportunity to share tips on monitoring factory farm operations, filing complaints with state agencies, working with the media, and generating public support.

"We're all facing similar factory farm pollution threats" stated Madelon Salsbury, Concerned Citizens for the Protection of the Beaver Creek Watershed. "It is uplifting to gather together to not only share information, but also support for our efforts."

Tri-State Citizens for Clean Air and Water will meet again on January 11, 2003 in Northwestern Ohio.

Other Downstream Connections

Watershed groups and CAFO activists teamed up with the Ohio Environmental Council (OEC) for a "Watershed Watchdog Workshop" in Pemberville, at William Henry Harrison Park on Saturday, October 19. **Kathy Melmoth** participated, discussing the ECCSCM water monitoring project.

No fines yet for CAFO discharges, no enforcement – When?



 ECCSCM Officers: John Klein, President; Lynn Henning, V-P; Richard Chudey, Sec-Treas
 P.O. Box 254, Hudson, MI 49247
www.eccscm.org

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

Name: _____

Address: _____

___ \$ 20 Membership ___ \$10 Senior

THANK YOU!

We Support Sustainable Agriculture –

that preserves & protects water quality in streams and lakes

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

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

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