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Livestock owners now must pay to pollute | Environment

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Livestock owners now must pay to pollute

Submitted by [Anna Virginia Greene](#) ([profile/59161/anna-virginia-greene](#)), Web Producer
Thursday, May 24th, 2012, 10:38am

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CHAMPAIGN, IL — Yesterday the Illinois Senate passed the Clean Water Funding Fairness Act (HB 5642), ending the livestock industry's unique exemption from paying fees for their Clean Water Act permits. Representative Tryon (Crystal Lake) and Senator Frerichs (Champaign) became the bill's sponsors after being asked to do so by Illinois' environmental community.

"As a firm believer in the polluter pays principle, I am thrilled to see our hard work pay off with the passage of this very fair bill," said Dr. Stacy James, Water Resources Scientist at Prairie Rivers Network.

In 2010, Prairie Rivers Network discovered that concentrated animal feeding operations

(CAFOs) were exempt from paying fees to discharge pollution under the Clean Water Act. All other industrial polluters must pay an annual fee for their National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permits. In the absence of a fee, the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) was funding their CAFO regulatory program with fee money from the other permittees.

The funding shortfall may have been one of the reasons the U.S. EPA determined in 2010 that Illinois' regulatory program for CAFOs is inadequate. This determination gave merit to claims made by Illinois Citizens for Clean Air & Water in their 2008 petition to U.S. EPA. The petition claimed IEPA was failing to issue permits or adequately respond to complaints about discharging CAFOs, and did not have a complete inventory of the state's over 20,000 animal feeding

operations.

"As a result of the petition, Illinois has been at risk of losing its authority to regulate all industries under the Clean Water Act. This is an unfortunate scenario for other industries that, by default, have been paying the costs of the CAFO regulatory program," according to Danielle Diamond, attorney for Illinois Citizens for Clean Air & Water.

To create a permanent funding source and end the unfair fee exemption, Prairie Rivers Network, Environment Illinois, and Illinois Citizens for Clean Air & Water drafted a bill that created a permit fee for CAFOs. After initial resistance from the Illinois Farm Bureau and Illinois Pork Producers Association, all interested parties agreed to the bill.

"This bill is about fairness and protecting Illinois' waters," said Max Muller, Program Director with Environment Illinois. "A minority of factory farms are significant polluters of Illinois' waterways. They should help cover the costs of that pollution so taxpayers don't have to."

Among those who lobbied in support of the bill were many rural residents who live near CAFOs. These residents live with the air and water pollution that comes from large-scale livestock operations confining thousands of animals on small acreage. Residents who pay such a personal cost strongly agree that CAFOs should have to pay to pollute.

"Permits are beneficial because they prevent pollution and create greater accountability. As a farmer and a Farm Bureau member, I was so glad to see agreement on this bill," said Cindy Bonnet, who once raised livestock in Jo Daviess County and is a member of Illinois Citizens for Clean Air & Water.

Prairie Rivers Network is Illinois' statewide river conservation organization and the state affiliate of the National Wildlife Federation. Environment Illinois is a statewide, citizen-funded environmental advocacy organization working for clean air, clean water, and open spaces in Illinois. Illinois Citizens for Clean Air & Water is a state-wide coalition of farmers and rural residents advocating for sound policies to protect the environment and human health from the negative impacts of large-scale industrial livestock operations. Information about these organizations can be found online at www.prairierivers.org, www.environmentillinois.org (http://www.environmentillinois.org),

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