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HOMES continues fight against the megadairy

Staff Report

The citizens' group, HOMES (Helping Others Maintain Environmental Standards) in Jo Daviess County is continuing its fight against A.J. Bos, the megadairy they say threatens the quality of life in their rural area by unregulated pollution.

This ever-expanding saga of citizens vs. giant corporation had its beginning Oct. 1, 2010, when neighbors of A.J. Bos megadairy noticed the normally clear tributary to the Apple River that originated on the Bos facility was bright purple. HOMES members alerted the IEPA and U.S. EPA, and they immediately investigated. An employee of the megadairy told the IEPA he spread 320,000 gallons of purple leachate onto 5 acres of land, or well more than 10 times the customary application rate.

Legal actions filed

April 20, 2011, Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan filed a five-count suit with the Illinois Pollution Control Board (IPCB) against the megadairy, requesting a \$250,000 fine. Since then, lawyers for both sides have filed legal documents with the IPCB.

April 19, 2012, the IPCB hosted another conference call between the Illinois attorney general and

lawyers representing the megadairy. They report that a proposal for settlement is being circulated, but no agreement has yet been announced. The next conference call was scheduled for June 28.

The people of HOMES have presented their case that massive animal factories are being lured to Illinois by industrial agriculture interest groups, including the Farm Bureau. HOMES says they are attracted to Illinois by our lax environmental standards and free water. A.J. Bos, the 5,500-head dairy near Galena, was permitted against the wishes of the Winnebago County Board, and will be one of the largest animal factories east of the Mississippi.

Citizens trying to stop this facility were told by the courts they had no standing to question the permit issued by the Illinois Department of Agriculture. State agricultural law favors industrial facilities over sustainable family farms and must be changed to protect our air, water, soil and food supply.

The construction site of this proposed megadairy consists of 130 acres, of which 42 would be allocated to stagnating manure ponds 20 feet deep, one-half mile from houses of residents. The stream flowing under manure ponds will transport waste directly into the Apple River. According to court testimony given by James Evans, senior agricultural engineer for Maurer Stutz, the firm that engineered this megadairy, 42 acres of manure ponds will leak “a little less than 1,000 gallons per day per acre.”

What citizens can do

To date, Illinois citizens and businesses have subsidized the CAFO [Confined Animal Feeding Operation] program because livestock operations have always been exempt from fees. However, numerous CAFOs have been caught discharging, so they should contribute to the cost of regulating their own pollution. As a result of the hard work of HOMES, ICCAW [Illinois Citizens for Clean Air & Water], Environment Illinois, and Prairie Rivers Network, H.B. 5642, the Clean Water Funding Fairness Bill, has passed both the House and Senate.

On a state level, HOMES urges citizens to ask their representatives to vote for H.B. 3504 — Permit fees for CAFOs. This bill is supported by the IEPA and will give the IEPA funds to police CAFOs that have a history of polluting.

Citizens can ask their representative to restore local control. The Livestock Management Facilities Act (LMFA) gives the Illinois Department of Agriculture the power to overrule city and county boards. Communities know what is in their best interest and should have the right to accept or reject these industrial facilities.

On a federal level, prohibit non-therapeutic uses of antibiotics in food animals. Massive quantities of antibiotics are used to keep food animals alive in factories, which has caused a surge in antibiotic-resistant infections. See SaveAntibiotics.org for more information.

HOMES is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt, pro-agriculture group of farmers and citizens dedicated to protecting family farms, rural communities, human health, and the environment by promoting sustainable agriculture and conserving our natural resources. For more information or to donate: HOMES, P.O. Box 674, Warren, IL 61087. Website is www.StopTheMegaDairy.org.

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