



Citizens for Alternatives to Chemical Contamination

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Earth Share of Michigan
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Chapter Organizations:
Huron Environmental Activist League

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Contact:

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TO THE MICHIGAN HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES: PROTECT THE HEALTH OF OUR WATERS AND COMMUNITIES - STOP BAD CAFO BILLS!

Citizens for Alternatives to Chemical Contamination (CACC) calls upon the Michigan House of Representatives to stand with the citizens of Michigan, who are fighting the unmitigated pollution of Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) – pollution that threatens the health of our communities, the health of our waters, and the quality of our food supply. We urge you to join your voice with those farmers who promote sustainable agriculture in Michigan, the Michigan State Medical Society, The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, many local units of government in areas directly affected by these CAFOs, as well as more than 40 environmental groups - and send SB 501-504 & 447-448 back to the drawing board. These bills were passed without regard for human or animal health protection, or protection of our waters, including drinking water, healthy beaches, healthy waterways for fish or other aquatic life, and without any regard for the protection of our food supply.

These bills would effectively deregulate most CAFOs in Michigan and install a largely voluntary program for pollution control. The state would have virtually no regulatory control over the pollution from these giant CAFOS, or conditions for either workers or animals at these CAFOS, conditions that allow for huge amounts of animal waste to overflow into our streams and rivers - air and water pollution that can seriously sicken and kill human beings. CAFOS are less than one-half of one percent of Michigan farms, yet the pollution they produce is staggering. Many CAFOs have been built in Michigan because Michigan's lack of regulations makes our state an easy picking.

Here is the background for these bills: The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality requires water quality permits of just 60 of Michigan's 200 CAFOs today. A voluntary program called Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP) was allowed by the EPA as a trial program to see how it compared to a permit program, with most CAFOs currently under voluntary oversight. Both MDEQ and EPA have publicly stated that MAEAP does not protect the environment as well as the permits. These bills are on a fast-track because July 1st is the deadline for over 120 CAFOS that were under MAEAP, that would have to apply for a first-ever permit.

These bills are a shameful endorsement of big money riding roughshod over the health of our countryside, our waterways, our citizens and our food supply. Small family farms are forced to compete against these huge factory farms, whose owners appear unconcerned with the damages left in the wake of their unhealthy practices - all to make quick money. Consider the legacy of sick animals, sick humans, impaired watersheds and an unhealthy food supply that these large CAFOs produce.

Large CAFO wastes are not the same as that produced on traditional family farms. Thousands of animals are crowded into unhealthy conditions - some for their entire life. They breathe unhealthy air and may never see sunlight or the outdoors. They produce enormous amounts of manure and liquid manure that, due to economics, must be stored in vast lagoons nearby. One cow's waste, for instance, is equal to more than that of twenty human beings. Untreated waste from 3,000 cows would equal the waste of 60,000 people - equivalent to the fecal wastes of a city! The difference is that cities are required by law to treat their wastes. Such enormous amounts of untreated manure, poisons the soil and the air, sickening nearby neighbors, who are exposed to dangerous amounts of hydrogen sulfide gas, ammonia and methane in the never-ending stench. These wastes often breach their containments to flow to groundwater and surface water, devastating aquatic life in connecting waterways, and threatening human health downstream by contaminating drinking water and local beaches. This is diametrically different from the amounts of manure spread by a traditional family farm.

We ask you to allow testimony from all interested citizens, and to deny passage of these bills, which have no beneficial purpose and will not promote sustainable and healthy agriculture in the rich tradition of Michigan farmers.

CACC is one of more than 40 environmental groups calling on the Michigan legislature to enact a moratorium on new and expanding CAFOs in Michigan until they can be regulated in a way that protects public health and the environment. Please see our attached resolution on CAFOs passed at CACC's General Membership Meeting in June of this year.

Citizens for Alternatives to Chemical Contamination (CACC) is a grassroots environmental education and advocacy organization dedicated to the principles of social and environmental justice and protection of the Great Lakes Ecosystem. The majority of CACC's members are residents of Michigan.

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Resolution Regarding CAFOs in Michigan

Whereas Citizens for Alternatives to Chemical Contamination is a grassroots environmental education and advocacy organization dedicated to the principles of social and environmental justice and protection of the Great Lakes Ecosystem; and

Whereas over one-half of U.S. livestock are now concentrated on five percent of livestock farms, and these concentrated animal feed operation (CAFOs) generate an estimated 575 billion pounds of animal manure yearly, with byproducts and materials that are a serious threat to human health, including (according to the American Public Health Association,) heavy metals, antibiotics, pathogen-bacteria, nitrogen and phosphorus, dust, and mold, among others; and

Whereas, huge amounts of manure are produced at these CAFOs and, due to economics, typically stored in lagoons, open or closed pits and later sprayed untreated on nearby fields; and

Whereas runoff from these fields can be carried by surface waters and affect water quality, including drinking water and area beaches; and

Whereas epidemiologists have linked several outbreaks of serious illness and death to pathogens from this manure waste from CAFOs; and,

Whereas Michigan's existing laws governing CAFO siting and operation are far too weak to protect public health and the environment; and

Whereas the DEQ lacks the necessary resources to monitor CAFO performance and impacts to air, water and public health; and

Whereas under the Right to Farm Act, local governmental planning and zoning units are severely restricted in their abilities to control CAFOs or the pollution they generate,

Therefore, Citizens for Alternatives to Chemical Contamination resolves that we support:

1. Immediate enforcement of the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act

(NREPA) PA 451

2. A temporary moratorium on all construction on CAFOs in Michigan until the Right to farm Act is amended to comply with the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act, PA 451
3. Acknowledgement of the established right of local government planning and zoning units to regulate CAFOs through planning and local ordinances
4. Comprehensive permitting and rigorous DEQ oversight of all new and existing CAFOs

Be it further resolved that a copy of this resolution be forwarded to Governor Granholm, to the Michigan Association of Counties, and the Michigan Township Association, and to each County Commission in the state of Michigan.

This resolution was passed unanimously at CACC's General Membership Meeting, Lansing, Michigan, June 10th, 2007.