Crawford County Passes CAFO Moratorium!

Challenges and opportunities as Marietta Township passes CAFO issue to the county, and Wisconsin fails to act

By Forest Jahnke

After an upswell of public outcry for some guidance and planning from our county, and an unfortunately divisive public meeting, the Crawford County Board passed a Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO) moratorium in December 2019.

This gives the county a year to study the impacts of CAFOs and come up with a plan for where, how, and how many of these operations can be sited in our county, and how the county plans to ensure public health and safety.

Crawford Stewardship Project has been integral in bringing these issues to the attention of the county for over a decade, in manifesting the moratorium, and will be there every step of the way to make the most of this opportunity.

Our formation of the neighborhood group, Kickapoo Stewards, furthered the moratorium effort in the Town of Marietta, bringing the concerns of added liquid manure, heavy town road use, and diminished property values forward.

The Marietta Township Board, after only half of their year long CAFO moratorium had passed, voted to drop their Township CAFO moratorium the week after the county moratorium passed.

We were disappointed that the Township did not see the value in a multi-level collaboration to tackle this in a way that works best for both our county and our townships. However, we know that being proactive is critical, and we will continue to be in contact and provide options for townships to take.

All this work comes at exactly the right time, as Crawford County’s lone CAFO, Roth Feeder Pig, has now applied to the DNR for a permit to build a new facility - in Marietta Township - of roughly twice the size of their current CAFO.

We work mainly on the local level helping bring information and community input to our local municipalities that feel incapable of dealing with these rapid changes in agriculture, and the county that now struggles to pick up the pieces within the limitations imposed by the state.

Ten Years Show Increasingly Polluted Streams

What will be done about this crisis?

By Omaru Heras

The COVID-19 virus outbreak has reminded us again that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. This situation nearly paralyzed the world, but not all our health crises receive such attention. If only we could see this sort of seriousness when our surface and underground waters are constantly polluted. Many water pollution sources, particularly liquid manure lagoons, are also home for viruses and bacterial mutations. Public health is intimately related to land use, weather cycles, and water, soil, and air quality.

Since 2009, CSP’s Water Quality Monitoring Program has expanded to three zones in Crawford County, monitoring seven sites of major concern.

The results obtained demonstrate exponential increases of contaminants that are threatening our health and aquatic ecosystems.
A 100 THANKS to all of you who, despite the distractions and disruptions unfolding around us, recognized the ongo-
ing value of our work with your generous donations. Your individual donations are essential for us to continue forging ahead with our many creative and collaborative projects to steward our precious land and waters in these chaotic times.
While this is our main focus, we cannot ignore the backroom deals going on at the state level to further restrict local control.

An immense amount of time has gone into attempts to improve the now 14 year old Livestock Siting Law, the one-size-fits-all regulatory framework the state imposed on local communities to provide “regulatory certainty” for the large agricultural lobby groups.

After three review periods, the most recent of which went so far as to hold public hearings across the state and resulted in a re-written draft rule which, while imperfect, made some significant improvements, no changes have been made.

The information we are gathering reveals stunning and rising levels of E. coli and Total Phosphorus.

Though we are impatient for significant action to occur to protect our watersheds, the WI DNR’s databases, newspapers, social media, and our supporters help us to raise awareness of this serious threat to health.

If you want to be an active witness/volunteer on existing sites of concern, contact Omara at oheras@crawfordstewardship.org, 608-632-7021.

Another health crisis, another reason to ORGANIZE

We see the dangers of this virus and will take the obvious safety measures, but will not let it stop us for a moment.

We too face the fear that has gripped the planet, but will use it to note the structural weaknesses of our society, and propose more resilient futures.

We will deal with the challenges, and will take up the opportunities offered:

• To stop, listen, and take care of ourselves and each other.
• To remain flexible and refocus on what matters most.
• To appreciate the many blessings and strengths of our community, while recognizing the systemic crises that have led to so much fear and chaos, and the road we face to build something new.
• To organize for the kind of family, community, nation, and world we want to see.

Together we can
Long-awaited Groundwater Study Delayed

How must we adjust?

By Eli Mandel

In the Spring of 2020, after years of prep work, Crawford Stewardship Project was pleased to see solid action manifest by Crawford, Vernon, and Richland counties, as they set to begin the Driftless Area Water Study (DAWS). Unfortunately, like so much else in our lives, we saw these plans postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Fortunately, DAWS will still be fully realized and completed. The initial sampling date will be moved to Monday, October 26th, 2020, with a follow-up spring testing date in 2021 to be determined.

We are so grateful for all the time and support for this much needed first step in understanding the health of our groundwater, here in the heart of Driftless Wisconsin. Though postponed, we look forward to this first round of well testing and will continue to push for the in-depth hydrogeological study and action that our area so desperately needs.

In addition to an already hectic start to the year, we learned that Roth Feeder Pig Inc. has formally applied for a permit from the Wisconsin DNR to license a feeder pig CAFO on Harvest Ln, Town of Marietta, Crawford County, WI. Though expected, this highlights the urgent need for more action.

These ever-changing and uncertain times bring to our attention the importance of local control and scientific precautionary principles. We need local engagement and collaboration to address the complex difficulties we face together.

This is why our communities came together in 2019 to ask Crawford County to address and study what we know about the impacts of concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) on the safety, health, and welfare of our citizens.

Crawford County’s CAFO Moratorium Ordinance has now been heavily impacted by the pandemic. Locally, we have seen “stay at home orders” affecting all corners of our rural life. Just when Crawford County’s CAFO study group had their first real meeting of substance, meetings were cancelled until further notice.

With the viral epidemic reaching into the foreseeable future, it is time for us to call for and utilize the ordinance’s built-in possibility for a one year moratorium extension. This is the legal and responsible action to take at this time.

The reason for enacting the moratorium and to take a pause on permitting these CAFOs was to give us time to use rational thought, investigation, and collaboration to better understand and protect the health, safety, and welfare of our rural community.

Now is no time to rush through applications, ignore the will of the people, or overlook our due diligence. The moratorium was passed so we could participate in DAWS and better understand the health of our groundwater, and we will not have meaningful results on this until 2021.

Further, the study group was supposed to listen to experts, examine evidence and then make policy and ordinance recommendations to the Crawford County Board. This task is next to impossible to complete in the current timeline, with the study committee report due in October 2020, and the moratorium expiring two months later.

CSP will continue to support the efforts of our communities in the Driftless Area Water Study and responsibly maintaining and extending our county’s CAFO Moratorium.

Together we cultivate, grow and sustain healthy communities of life. As we heal our world, we heal ourselves, resiliently strengthening us all!
Crawford County Joins the WI Farmers Union Community

Join us in re-invigorating this important organization!

Last fall, Crawford County joined with the thriving Vernon County chapter, and are currently integrated structurally as the Crawford-Sterling Local Chapter. Crawford Stewardship Project is excited to facilitate increased participation in the Farmers Union.

If you are already a member of WFU and live in Crawford County, please consider getting involved in the action. If not a member of WFU, please consider joining, to grow our ranks and regional influence within the union, and to influence policy to protect farmers and rural communities at the state level.

Skye Harnsberger, Sara Tedeschi, and Forest Jahnke collaboratively re-crafting WI Farmers Union policy as delegates at the WFU State Convention this February.

CSP also helped catalyze Grant County Rural Stewardship and the new Grant/Iowa Farmers Union Chapter, and attended their recent educational “Soil Health and Diversity” event in Fennimore.

Stewardship Business Alliance

Stewardship is pro-business, pro-farming and pro-environment

In 2020 Crawford Stewardship Project launches our Stewardship Business Alliance; a network of farmers, businesses, entrepreneurs, and job creators united in stewarding water, soil, and a healthy environment. We unite to conserve our natural resources, a healthy rural economy, and way of life. Stewardship Business Alliance is a network and platform for businesses that rely on a healthy environment and abundant natural resources. The foundation of a diverse rural economy is a sustainable and profitable relationship with our ecosystems and the natural world. We will be helping to form a core group of local business leaders in 2020.

If your business is interested in being a part of this initial phase; please reach out to us!

Contact: Eli Mandel, 608-632-4213 or emandel@crawfordstewardship.org.

This leadership group will help inform the Alliance’s initial focus and directions moving forward into 2021 and beyond. It is apparent that the increasing severity and frequency of extreme precipitation events, an evolving rural economy, and changing generational and socioeconomic demographics, call us to link together, build resilience, and mutual success. CSP recognizes the leadership roles of our local farmers and business leaders. Our rural way of life depends on business innovation and diversity.
KARST EXPLORATION 2020

Saturday, August 15
1 - 4:30pm
Wauzeka Village Hall
213 E Front St, Wauzeka

1pm - Fly through 500,000,000 years of geological history in an hour with Professor Kelvin Rodolfo

2-4:30pm - Join us on our exploration of some notable local karst features*, and discuss what these underground water-flows mean for our land use, and our health and safety.

*PLEASE COME PREPARED FOR WALKING THROUGH FIELDS AND WOODS.
LIGHT REFRESHMENTS PROVIDED.
FREE AND FAMILY-FRIENDLY.