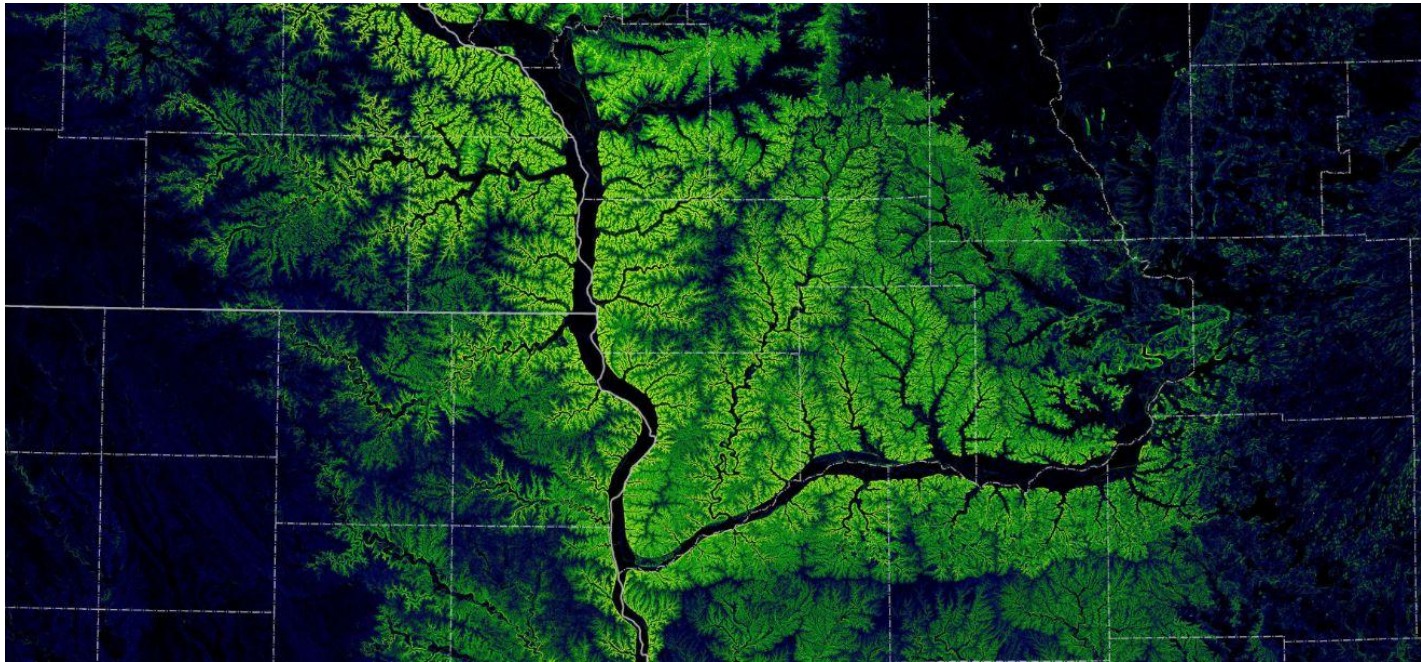


Crawford Stewardship Project

Project Timeline

Crawford County in the Driftless area of southwest Wisconsin is on ancient and deeply incised karstic rolling hills above streams, rivers, and their adjoining floodplains and wetlands of continental importance.



Driftless region slope map, with black as flat, and lighter greens with steeper slopes. Crawford County is framed to the South by the Wisconsin River coming in from the East, and to the West by the Mississippi River. The Kickapoo River valley cuts through the center of the county.

2006

CAFO

The WI Livestock Siting Law is passed, stripping local control of CAFOs from communities. The Department of Ag, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) enacts a process to review every 4 years. In these processes, DATCP staff received considerable feedback from experts and the public (including CSP), with many improvements proposed, but ultimately no changes have ever made it through to the rule.

2007

CAFO

Roth Feeder Pig, a second generation hog farm (the largest in the county), submits applications to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) for a Wisconsin Pollution Discharge Elimination Systems (WPDES) permit to expand beyond 1000 “animal units” (au) into a Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO). Applications are sent to Crawford County as well, which had passed a Livestock Siting Ordinance giving it some regulatory authority over CAFOs.

Concerned citizens organize and form Crawford Stewardship Project (CSP). CSP distributes informational notebooks about CAFO impacts to the County Board, County Land Conservation Committee (LCC), and Health Departments.

Roth builds the facility without agency engineering review or inspections and without a permit before county or state permits are received.

Crawford County holds a public hearing on the operation’s application.

2008

CAFO

The Crawford County LCC approves Conservation Department staff’s recommendation to permit the operation. The decision is tabled for as long as possible, with some members abstaining in recognition that they were forced to permit due to the recently implemented state Livestock Siting Law. The law establishes a one-size-fits-all regulatory standard for the state, preempting local control of CAFO siting.

Upon appeal, the Livestock Siting Review Board agrees with the neighbors and CSP that the application is flawed and should not be approved, but shortly thereafter reverses their decision, publicly citing “technical reasons”. Behind the scenes industry pressure is suspected.

Crawford County amends its Livestock Siting Ordinance so that no county permits will be granted for CAFOs until state permits are granted.

CSP continues scaling up education on CAFO concerns, ground- and surface-water susceptibility and other land & water use issues.

2009

CAFO

Roth Feeder Pig receives a notice of non-compliance from the DNR for exceeding 1000 au before WPDES permit is granted and other irregularities on their application.

CSP begins a volunteer water quality monitoring program with neighbors of the operation on streams in the watershed of Roth Feeder Pig CAFO coordinating monitoring through the DNR Water Action Volunteers program, paying for additional testing out of pocket and reporting results to the DNR. CSP also subsidizes well tests for immediate neighbors of the CAFO, finding some impact, but most were below the 10mg/L health standard for nitrates.

CSP hires expert reviewer to evaluate the annual Nutrient Management Plans. CSP organizes with neighbors and experts to urge the DNR to conduct an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for Roth Feeder Pig.

CSP organizes Sustain Rural Wisconsin Network with other groups and individuals. It is a state-wide coalition of grassroots groups resisting CAFOs to coordinate strategy and influence state policy.

CSP starts their educational programming on karst geology, providing presentations and field trips.

2010

CAFO

DNR holds a public hearing on the WPDES permit.

DNR issues a WPDES permit, despite broad public opposition to the project along with substantial expert testimony and analysis pointing to the inherent dangers of permitting too many animals on insufficient and sensitive karst land.

2011

CAFO

Roth Feeder Pig receives another notice of non-compliance from the DNR.

Mining

Confronted with a high capacity well application for water export, CSP slows the process, and helps form Save Copper Creek, who successfully convinces the DNR to require water monitoring. The project did not move forward.

2012

CAFO

Roth Feeder Pig receives another notice of non-compliance from the DNR.

Mining

CSP took part in County committee to research and propose model frac sand mining ordinance for towns to consider.

CSP worked with neighbors of proposed Bridgeport mine to try and stop the proposal in the LWSR, and with neighbors of loading site in PdC

Crawford County agrees to a Moratorium on Frac Sand Mining, followed by township and village moratoria. CSP helps develop a draft ordinance for municipalities and mobilizes with supporters to move forward at the local level. Pattison Sand Company proposes the first frac sand mine in Crawford County in Bridgeport Township.

2013

CAFO

Roth Feeder Pig receives another notice of non-compliance from the DNR.

Mining

Richland Stewardship Project forms to work on sand mining issues in RC

The City of Prairie du Chien, several villages, and all but two townships pass some version of the basic regulatory ordinance drafted by the county, with Freeman Township adopting zoning.

2014

CAFO

Roth Feeder Pig receives another notice of non-compliance from the DNR; this notice was challenged by the CAFO and rescinded. The discrepancies and violations leading to these notices resulted largely from CSP's paid review of the Nutrient Management Plans, not the county or state catching them. None of these violations resulted in any fine or consequences.

CSP and neighbors continue tracking the operation through contracted reviews and citizen monitoring

Mining

Pattison Sand Company Wisconsin & Southern Railroad works with the railroad to force through a frac sand loading hub in the residential zoned area of Prairie du Chien. CSP brings forward the concerns of the community, but the City Council ultimately does nothing for fear of litigation.

2015

CAFO

Roth Feeder Pig files to renew WPDES permit. On paper, the operation appears to be planning to expand significantly, but assurances are made by the operator and the DNR that this is not the case. It was just a re-accounting of how pigs are tallied.

At the public hearing, again many speak out against re-permitting the operation due to repeated violations, water quality impacts, and discrepancies in the application.

The DNR and DATCP go through a second review process of the Livestock Siting Law, recommendations are developed, but again no changes are made. Citizens and groups actively bring forward recommendations with each review.

2016

CAFO

Roth Feeder Pig's WPDES permit renewal is approved by the DNR.

CSP's Karst Landscapes and Groundwater Susceptibility Survey of Crawford County launches with Professor Emeritus Kelvin Rodolfo, Legion GIS, and many volunteer scientists.

2017

CAFO

Records reveal that manure production has roughly doubled over the last handful of years from 1.5 to 3 million gallons/year. This, and many noted discrepancies on the Nutrient Management Plans, is not addressed by the DNR.

2018

CAFO

Crawford County unanimously passes a resolution urging the DNR to do its due diligence in fully implementing their regulatory program, and appeals for local flexibility to implement additional standards based on local hydrogeological realities.

2019

CAFO

CSP independently conducts a Drinking Water Education and Testing campaign, subsidising 53 well tests around the county. The highest test result for nitrates, at 27mg/L (nearly double the levels of the second highest result, and nearly three times the health standard of 10mg/L), was found directly down-slope from Roth Feeder Pig's production facility.

A small tributary stream to the Wisconsin River directly downslope from the Roth Feeder Pig production facility and central spreading fields is listed as impaired by the DNR based on data gathered by CSP volunteer monitors.

The DNR and DATCP go through a third review process of the Livestock Siting Law. This time with hearings throughout the state and a new rule drafted, but changes are again rejected.

CSP helps organize and motivate the Crawford, Vernon, and Richland County Conservation and Health Departments to fund and implement a tri-county coordinated well testing program, the Driftless Area Water Study (DAWS).

Concerned citizens learn that Roth Feeder Pig plans to build a new and expanded facility four miles away from the current facility. It is planned to be three times the size and expected to produce and spread 9.4 million gallons of manure per year.

CSP helps organize a new neighbor group, Kickapoo Stewards (KS).

CSP and KS bring the issue to Marietta Township. Large volumes of public input lead to the passage of a one-year township CAFO Moratorium. A Rural Land and Infrastructure Conservation Work-group is organized, which drafts reports for the township on various issues, including health and safety concerns. No action is taken by the township.

CSP and KS organize a campaign to pass a CAFO Moratorium for Crawford County, which succeeded with the passage of a one-year moratorium on CAFOs and forms a County CAFO Study Committee.

Marietta Township drops its moratorium half way through the year.

2020

CAFO

Due to the pandemic, many County CAFO Study Committee meetings are cancelled. DAWS well testing program is also postponed.

The Crawford County Board does not extend the CAFO moratorium despite the interruptions, a broad public mandate, support from the majority of the CAFO Study Committee, and a broad coalition of local organizations.

A 125 page report is presented to the County Board by the CAFO Study Committee. The report includes information on potential impacts of CAFOs and laid out a menu of options that the county could take action on to protect health and safety. No action is taken based on the report and public comment was formally stripped from County Board agendas.

CSP works with Crawford, Vernon, and Richland counties to test over 600 wells through the Driftless Area Water Study. Most area wells produce drinkable water; however there is a clear pattern of consistently elevated nitrates in areas of intensive agriculture.

CSP and KS submit over 200 local signatures and a request to the DNR for an Environmental Impact Statement for Roth Feeder Pig II. Following this request is a letter of support signed by 48 environmental, good governance, and agricultural organizations, and hundreds of letters and calls to the DNR, Lt. Governor, and other relevant entities.

Kickapoo Stewards started as a neighbor group, joined with CSP, and later morphed into the CSP CAFO Committee. CSP re-organizes a CAFO Committee of key stakeholders to keep up the grassroots efforts to educate the public, influence local and state policy, and if at all possible, stop Roth Feeder Pig II.

2021

CAFO

CSP expands their karst education, water quality monitoring, and encouraging citizen action, and steps up pressure on regulators to control new and expanding CAFOs, particularly Roth Feeder Pig II.

The DNR has drafted a proposed permit for Roth Feeder Pig II, with a “tentative recommendation to approve.” Over 100 locals virtually attended the DNR’s public hearing on the permit, and over 1200 comments were submitted to the DNR.