



DNR Decision to Issue Permit for Massive Hog Facility in Driftless Region Meets Widespread Criticism

State Regulators Deny Community's Request for Comprehensive Environmental Review.
Local Residents Say Decision Threatens Water Resources and Endangers Public Health

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Madison, WI—On Friday, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) issued a [wastewater permit](#) for the construction of a massive hog confinement facility overlooking the Kickapoo River in southwest Wisconsin's Crawford County. Local residents, who reacted to the news with frustration and disappointment, say they are examining their options and will continue to oppose the project.

Roth Feeder Pig II, together with an existing sister facility a few miles away, would be the largest hog concentrated animal feeding operation (CAFO) in the state. According to the proposal, the expansion would annually generate over 9.4 million gallons of manure and liquid waste at a facility perched on a narrow ridge overlooking the Kickapoo River. Much of the waste would be spread on agricultural fields where contaminants like nitrates or bacteria could easily enter surface water and groundwater due to sloping topography and the highly permeable and fractured nature of the underlying bedrock.

The unprecedented scale of such a project in a watershed that is uniquely susceptible to groundwater contamination has alarmed neighbors of the proposed facility and residents of downstream communities.

Health and safety issues related to CAFOs—manure runoff, drinking water contamination, air pollution, and road hazards—have been a source of growing concern among southwest Wisconsin residents. In early 2018, the Crawford County Board of Supervisors passed a resolution acknowledging the County's susceptibility to groundwater contamination due to the fractured, or 'karst', bedrock that underlies much of the area.

In November 2020, Midwest Environmental Advocates submitted a [formal request to the Department of Natural Resources \(DNR\)](#) on behalf of more than 200 Crawford County residents who asked the agency to prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) before issuing permits for the construction of the facility.

“We were disappointed to learn that the final permit does not respond to the impressive amount of input the DNR received from members of the public and from legal and scientific experts,” said **Crawford Stewardship Project coordinator Forest Jahnke**. “In the end, it doesn't include any additional conditions that would ensure the protection of public health and water resources. The DNR’s decision shows how lacking our one-size-fits-all state regulations are and points to the need for more targeted local protections.”

MEA Staff Attorney Adam Voskuil said, “The DNR failed to take advantage of a critical opportunity to demonstrate its commitment to protecting natural resources and the health of Wisconsin residents by conducting a thorough environmental review before allowing this project to move forward. We stand by our belief that a comprehensive EIS is not only warranted, but necessary to protect the area’s water resources, wildlife, and the health of local communities.”

Midwest Environmental Advocates is a public interest law center that works to defend public rights, protect natural resources, and ensure transparency and accountability in government. Learn more at midwestadvocates.org.

Crawford Stewardship Project works to protect the environment of Crawford County and neighboring regions from threats of polluting and extractive industries, to promote sustainable land use, environmental justice, and local control of natural resources. Learn more at crawfordstewardship.org.

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