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Wood County Citizens Opposed to Factory Farms

Dairy Updates

Manders Dairy

There has still been no construction on the expansion to 2,100 cows as approved by the ODA 20 months ago.

Reyskens Dairy

As reported in the last newsletter, the ODA approved "major operational changes" but these plans have already been modified before the initial changes were even completed. The new barn has not been built yet but it appears the additional manure pond was completed. According to records from the Ohio EPA, the Dairy's engineer stated a few months ago that the owner proposes to divert runoff to a new runoff storage pond east of the other new manure pond recently completed. Due to this additional storage, the engineer stated that a "Modification" to the ODA permit is required – which would result in the re-issuance of the permit.

Watch for this ODA public notice in the Sentinel. One has to wonder why there would be so many major changes to this relatively new facility.

Naomi/Dekker Jersey Dairy

The deed for **80** acres was finally transferred from Naomi to Dekker last September (for \$1,360,000) even though Kevin Elder stated in an earlier letter that the permit included **200** acres and the permit would be invalid if this land was not part of the sale. According to records from the ODA, the Director approved an extension of the permits in December 2008 to two companies, one of which had been dissolved 11 months earlier. This extension was granted even though the new owner has not yet started construction nor did he submit a binding contract to start construction as required by law. As reported in the last newsletter, there is data in the Naomi and Green

permits that appears to have been fraudulently manipulated. This extremely serious situation has been brought to the attention of many state and local officials but the ODA has repeatedly refused to provide any supporting documentation. The ERAC appeal has stalled. Our request for summary judgment was filed with the Commission last May and we appeared before the Commission last August but there still has been no ruling. The ODA is currently proposing to rescind the floodplain regulation which is the **basis** for our appeal. If you would be willing to donate to this appeal, please contact Vickie Askins.

Green Dairy

The ODA public hearing for the modified permit was held on December 11th at Elmwood School. ODA personnel shortened the open house from one hour to 30 minutes and then left the public hearing 45 minutes early. They gave no presentation and the ODA engineer could not explain how a fourth manure pond would reduce the phosphorus. All public comments were in opposition to the Dairy. Not only is there questionable soil testing data for the fields in this permit but they reduced the acreage to less than one acre per cow. The Ohio Administrative Code requires 2 ½ acres per cow. The dairy owner has a \$7.8 M loan with NCB, over \$500,000 in liens, and no cows.

Perry Township

Nothing new to report.

Sandusky County

Excavation was begun on both dairy sites but the equipment pulled out months ago.

Mark your calendars for these important, upcoming events!

2009 Ohio Environmental Council Lobby Day

Tuesday, March 31

Bring your voice to the Ohio Statehouse on behalf of the environment! During OEC Lobby Day, you will be part of a team that brings environmental concerns and priorities to state lawmakers, agency officials, and legislative

committee staff. The OEC will set up the appointments as well as give you helpful tips and information to make your meetings as productive as possible.

More info may be found at:

www.theoec.org.

Environmental Justice Town Hall Meeting

Saturday, April 4

Please try to attend the upcoming Ohio EJ Town Hall Meeting! This meeting is scheduled for April 4th from 10:00 am to 12:30 pm at the University of Toledo. It

will provide a forum to learn more about the problems in our communities and ideas for solutions, including a proposed Environmental Justice Bill for Ohio. More info may be found at: www.ohioej.org.

Financial Woes

The global credit crisis is causing problems at Vreba-Hoff and their dairies.

facilities near Hudson and produce more revenue.

It was reported last October that the head of Vreba-Hoff Dairy Development had run into financial problems. According to an article in the *Fulton County Expositor*, the downtown rebuilding project and Vreba-Hoff's new multi-million office complex have been put on hold. A source reported that "multiple companies are demanding payment" for services. This source also said "Van Bakel's financial woes are coming from several directions. First are fines levied against several of his dairy farms by Michigan's Environmental Protection Agency. Adding to the cash crunch are soaring feed and fuel prices."

The request was called ironic by Alan Hoffman, an assistant Michigan attorney general. The penalties resulted from Vreba-Hoff's failure to properly handle the large volume of manure from its current herd of about 6,500 cows, he said.

A November *Toledo Blade* reported that lenders had withdrawn from the downtown rebuilding project and another potential financier had gone out of business.

"Perhaps what is most ironic about Vreba-Hoff's objection and requested relief is the fact that the reason for the lawsuit in the first place was because of Vreba-Hoff's inability to properly treat or otherwise control the vast amount of agricultural waste generated by over 6,000 cows. Rather than reduce or eliminate the source of the waste, Vreba-Hoff is requesting to add even more cows, with the 'hope' that the treatment system (which has failed to meet the agreed upon standards) will somehow work as originally represented sometime in the future. MDEQ has no confidence in Vreba-Hoff's projections or abilities, and merely asks compliance with the negotiated agreements."

Just last month, Vreba-Hoff asked to put off paying their fines until it can add about 1,000 cows to its two dairy

"Rather than reduce or eliminate the source of the waste, Vreba-Hoff is requesting to add even more cows".

-Alan Hoffman, assistant Michigan Attorney General

The theme of the Pure Farms, Pure Waters CAFO Summit was “with liberty and justice for all”.

Waterkeeper Alliance 2009 Summit

Teri Reinhart and I attended the **Waterkeeper Alliance 2009 Pure Farms, Pure Waters CAFO Summit** January 12-14 in New Bern, NC. These N.C. Waterkeepers are an amazing group of volunteers who do water testing and keep track of countless hog CAFOs in their areas. They took us on a field trip to introduce us to the impacts of the hog CAFOs on communities and the environment. (The streams are brown from manure run-off and the lagoons are pink from the hormones.)

The theme of this Summit was “**with liberty and justice for all**”. They explained that these industrial hog operations usually target low-income, rural areas – places where people have lost their voice in the process. According to Steve Fleischli, President of the Waterkeeper Alliance, “Unlike human waste, livestock waste typically is not treated. It’s dumped into open pits...emitting toxic gasses into the air as it decomposes...and running off into rivers and contaminating drinking supplies downstream. Animal factories

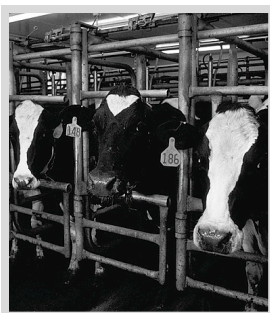
represent one of the greatest threats to the health of our waterways and our communities”.

They showed videos of horrendous pollution in their rivers and streams.

They told of massive fish kills – over 1 BILLION fish killed in 1991 in the Neuse River. They showed a video of thousands of dead hogs washing through their towns during a hurricane in the late nineties.

In addition to Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., other speakers included many N.C. Waterkeepers, Food & Water Watch, Organic Valley, economists, engineers, attorneys, politicians and many concerned citizens’ groups. We heard how CAFOs can only survive because they shift their costs onto the taxpayers and community, receive a disproportionate share of subsidies, and benefit from lax enforcement of current laws.

By Vickie Askins



“Psst... Bessie’s been behaving strangely, don’t you think? Do you suppose it’s hormones?”

Bankruptcy

Maple Grove Dairy, New Bavaria, Ohio, just filed for bankruptcy. The Background section of their filing tells the story about being “solicited” in the Netherlands by Vreba-Hoff. They “invested all of our funds” – but then “at the closing, the purchase price charged by Vreba-Hoff was substantially higher than the monies which were available. Vreba-Hoff took an ownership interest in the Debtor to cover the shortfall.” It goes on to state “From the very beginning, the

Debtor encountered financial and operational difficulties with the new dairy operation.” It was supposed to have 825 cows but “no permit was ever issued by the State of Ohio for 825 cows and absent a permit, the maximum number of cows permitted is 700.” Then they tell about “the herd behaved strangely.” “...problems resulting in injuries, illness, and even death.” Listed as personal property was “potential tort and breach of contract claims against Vreba-Hoff”.

W.C.C.O.F.F.

**PROTECT OUR
WATER, LAND,
& HEALTH**

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Information included in
this newsletter is
believed to be accurate,
but is not guaranteed.
WCCOFF is not liable for
errors or omissions.
March 25, 2009

***“Whatever you do will
be insignificant, but it
is very important that
you do it.”***

-Mahatma Gandhi

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Protect our water, land & health
FAMILY FARMS
NOT
FACTORY FARMS
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Humane Society Seeks to Outlaw Ohio Confinement Crates

Donna J. Miller recently wrote an article in the Cleveland Plain Dealer from which the following is excerpted:

The Humane Society of the United States is proposing legislation this year that would outlaw several common factory farm practices in Ohio. Like Proposition 2 that voters enacted in California, the Ohio law would ban the

use of battery cages for chickens, gestation crates for sows and veal crates for calves, said Dean Vickers, who directs the animal welfare group's Ohio campaigns. If legislators don't support the society's proposal, the national animal welfare group could pursue a ballot initiative, like the successful one in California.

What You Can Do

Continue to educate yourself. Access the **new** online training guide from the Michigan Chapter of the Sierra Club: “Stopping CAFO POLLUTION”. You can find a link to this site on our website.

Know where and how your food is produced. Buy locally and selectively, from sources that do not use hormones, antibiotics, or intensive confinement methods.

Keep a daily journal to document conditions before and after a CAFO moves into your neighborhood.

To learn how to file an official complaint against a permitted CAFO facility, go to www.wccoff.org and click on “How to make a complaint”.

About Our Organization ...

WCCOFF is a grassroots organization, which seeks to educate and inform the citizens of Wood County about the health and environmental dangers of mega farms, and to actively pursue solutions that will protect our health, our water, and our land.

WCCOFF calls for a moratorium on factory farms until implications for human health and environmental safety can be thoroughly studied and the wellbeing of our citizens duly guaranteed.

WCCOFF supports sustainable agricultural systems that are environmentally safe, economically viable, and socially just.

