

February 13, 2019

Dear Iowa General Assembly Member:

The 70 undersigned organizations urge you to support enactment of a legislative moratorium on new and expanded factory farms in Iowa.

Iowa's water pollution problems have reached crisis levels. Our state's hog factory farms, also known as concentrated animal feeding operations, alone produce 22 billion gallons of manure annually.¹ The manure produced on Iowa's factory farms would fill Iowa's tallest building, the Principal Building in Des Moines, 2.3 times every day.² No longer a valuable fertilizer, this manure is applied to fields at rates that far exceed crops' ability to absorb them, and the excess runs off into already polluted rivers and streams. As a result, agricultural pollution has damaged more than 1,000 miles of Iowa's rivers and streams and over 59,000 acres of its lakes, ponds and wetlands.³

High levels of nitrates from factory farm pollution threatens both aquatic species and the health of those who drink from the tap. Des Moines Water Works, the largest water utility in Iowa, consistently struggles to provide safe drinking water to Des Moines residents due to excessive amounts of nitrates from factory farms upstream.⁴ Des Moines famously has one of most expensive nitrate removal systems in the world, but it is far from the only place in Iowa with unsafe drinking water. In 2015, nitrate pollution, which has been linked to certain cancers, birth defects and other diseases, exceeded federal limits in 11 of the state's public water supplies.⁵ More than 200 of Iowa's community water systems struggle with high nitrate levels.⁶

The rise of factory farms has resulted in a steep decline in Iowa's independent family farms. Between 1982 and 2007, the number of hog farms in Iowa plunged by 82 percent, while the average number of hogs per farm rose from just under 500 to just

¹ Mitchell, Russell. "Supervisors continue effort to strengthen livestock siting formula." Dickinson County News. August 8, 2017.

² FWW analysis of Iowa CAFO manure production. USDA. Natural Resources Conservation Service. "Chapter 4: Agricultural Waste Characteristics." 210-VI- AWMFH. March 2008 at 4-13 through 4-20; "The Flood of the Century." Des Moines Register. July 17, 1993; DNR. "Basic AFO Data (With Animal Units) (This report includes only Active Operations)."

³ EPA. "Iowa assessment data 2014." Available at https://ofmpub.epa.gov/waters10/attains_index.home. Accessed August 2018.

⁴ Snider, Annie. "Iowa utility's lawsuit takes new stab at old nutrient problems." E&E News. January 29, 2015; Masters, Clay. "Iowa's nasty water war." Politico. January 21, 2016.

⁵ Bienkowski, Brian. "My number one concern is water." Environmental Health News. November 14, 2017.

⁶ Royte, Elizabeth. "The simple river-cleaning tactics that big farms ignore." National Geographic. December 7, 2017 at 6.

over 5,000 — a 10-fold increase.⁷ And this pork isn't ending up on the plates of Iowa residents. Pork is the second most exported commodity in the state of Iowa. In fact, Iowa is the top pork exporter in the country, sending close to \$2 billion in pork to countries abroad.⁸ Iowans are burdened by the impacts and the pollution this industry generates while the pork-- and the corporate profits-- leave our state.

Officials in both rural and urban counties are fighting to protect their residents. Nearly 25% of Iowa counties have passed resolutions in favor of stronger local control or a legislative moratorium because they recognize they have very little control in the permitting of new or expanded factory farms. The "Master Matrix," a scoring mechanism intended to give communities input, is so weak that in its 15-year existence all but 2% of proposals have passed. A passing score on the Master Matrix is 50% — an "F" by any other standard.

This industry and its unchecked expansion are wreaking havoc on family farms, communities and drinking water. A moratorium will give legislators and regulators an overdue opportunity to evaluate the public health, economic and societal impacts of factory farms while providing Iowa's communities with important statutory protections from further expansion of this industry.

We urge Iowa Senators and Representatives to co-sponsor and support legislative proposals for a moratorium on new and expanded factory farms in Iowa.

Sincerely,

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⁷ U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). National Agricultural Statistics Service. 1982 Census of Agriculture. Geographic Area Series — Iowa. AC82-A-15. May 1984 at Table 20 at 16; 2012 Census of Agriculture. State Data at Table 12 at 361.

⁸ USDA. [Fact sheet]. "State Fact Sheets: Iowa." Updated July 30, 2018 at 5.

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