



February 8, 2018

Dear Iowa General Assembly Member:

The 55 undersigned organizations urge you to support enactment of a legislative moratorium on new and expanded factory farms in Iowa.

Iowa is in the midst of a serious water pollution crisis. For several decades, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and state governments have failed to regulate the environmental impacts of factory farms, and the resulting impacts on Iowa's waterways are some of the worst in the nation. The vast quantities of manure generated by the state's factory farms — 22 billion gallons annually<sup>1</sup> — are applied to fields at rates that far exceed crops' ability to absorb them, and the excess runs off into rivers and streams.

750 water bodies in Iowa — over half of those tested — were found to be impaired in 2014 and the vast majority of those are impairments are from pollutants and conditions associated with factory farms, including E. coli, excessive algal growth and diminished aquatic life.<sup>2</sup> Iowa's largest water utility, the Des Moines Water Works, struggles to provide clean drinking water for Des Moines residents because of the excessive amount of nitrates discharged from the thousands of factory hog farms in counties upstream. Nitrates pose a serious public health threat, and over 60 additional cities and towns in Iowa have experienced high nitrate levels in their drinking water during the last five years.<sup>3</sup>

This huge amount of manure doesn't respect state boundaries — it ultimately flows downstream until it reaches the Gulf of Mexico, where it contributes to a 'dead zone' the size of New Jersey.<sup>4</sup>

Iowa's Department of Natural Resources (DNR), charged with regulating this industry, doesn't even have accurate records of how many factory farms exist in Iowa. Over the past several years, DNR has used satellite images to identify 5,063 potential livestock confinements that they previously did not know existed — factory farms that are completely unaccounted for in the state's records.<sup>5</sup> The agency still does not know how many are large enough to require permits or inspections, or which ones may be adding to the state's water pollution problems.

Local communities have very little influence in the permitting of new or expanded factory

---

<sup>1</sup> Russ Mitchell, *Supervisors continue effort to strengthen livestock siting formula*, Dickinson County News (Aug. 8, 2017). <http://www.dickinsoncountynews.com/story/2434152.html>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.iowadnr.gov/Environmental-Protection/Water-Quality/Water-Monitoring/Impaired-Waters>

<sup>3</sup> Donnelle Eller, *High Nitrites Plague 60 Iowa Cities, Data Show*, Des Moines Register (July 4, 2015).

<http://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/money/agriculture/2015/07/04/high-nitrates-iowa-cities/2972069>

<sup>4</sup> National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, *Gulf of Mexico 'Dead Zone' is the Largest Ever Measured* (Aug. 2, 2017). <http://www.noaa.gov/media-release/gulf-of-mexico-dead-zone-is-largest-ever-measured>

<sup>5</sup> See *2016 Annual Report for Work Plan Agreement Between the Iowa Department of Natural Resources and the Environmental Protection Agency Region 7*, IOWA DNR 5 (Aug. 1, 2016)

farms. The “Master Matrix,” a scoring mechanism intended to give communities input in the permitting process and protect communities and the environment, is so weak that in its 15 year existence all but 2% of proposals have passed.<sup>6</sup> A passing score on the Master Matrix is 50% — an “F” by any other standard. As a result, Iowa’s factory farm permitting program is failing Iowa’s communities. Family farmers and rural residents are often left feeling like prisoners in their own homes, unable to hold family gatherings or hang laundry outside to dry due to the overwhelming stench and air pollution. Retirees are left with the realization that their homes and properties — often their nest eggs — are depreciated due to the decline in property values associated with living next to a factory farm. Research has shown that Iowans living near factory farms are more likely to experience respiratory problems, headaches, diarrhea, burning eyes, nausea, and more serious health problems as a result of factory farm air pollution.<sup>7</sup>

Nearly 25% of Iowa counties, both rural and urban, have passed resolutions in favor of stronger local control or a legislative moratorium on new and expanded factory farms. Conversations about stopping expansion of industrialized agriculture began among citizen organizations, but are finally becoming mainstream. Iowa’s largest and most influential newspaper, the Des Moines Register, recently editorialized in favor of a moratorium.<sup>8</sup>

Iowans have exhausted all of their options in trying to rein in this industry, which has wreaked havoc on communities and drinking water. A moratorium will give legislators 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,

Wenonah Hauter  
Executive Director  
Food & Water Watch  
National

Adam Mason  
State Policy Organizing Director  
Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement  
Iowa

Diane Rosenberg  
Steering Committee Member  
Iowa Alliance for Responsible Agriculture  
(IARA) Iowa

Danielle Diamond  
Executive Director  
Socially Responsible Agricultural Project  
National

---

<sup>6</sup> *Animal Feeding Operations Database*, IOWA DNR, <https://programs.iowadnr.gov/animalfeedingoperations/> (Select “Reports,” then “Construction Review Activity,” and sort the “Matrix Required” column to remove facilities categorized as “No” or “Not Assigned (default)”) (last visited June 5, 2017).

<sup>7</sup> Thu, K., et al. (1997). *A control study of the physical and mental health of residents living near a large-scale swine operation*. *Journal of Agricultural Safety and Health*, 3, 13-26.

<sup>8</sup> The Register’s Editorial. *Hog wild: Iowa must tap the brakes on record growth of pork industry*, Des Moines Register (Sept. 29, 2017). <https://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/opinion/editorials/2017/09/29/hog-wild-iowa-pork-industry-growth/716489001/>

Pat Bowen  
Steering Committee Member  
100 Grannies for a Livable Future  
Iowa

Ed Fallon  
Executive Director  
Bold Iowa  
Iowa

Kemp Burdette  
Cape Fear Riverkeeper  
Cape Fear River Watch  
North Carolina

Amy van Saun  
Staff Attorney  
Center for Food Safety  
National

Janet Foust  
Defending Our Ixonia Countryside  
Wisconsin

Bill Stowe  
CEO and General Manager  
Des Moines Water Works  
Iowa

Gerry Rowland  
DSM River Water Trail  
Iowa

Mary Dougherty  
President  
Farms Not Factories  
Wisconsin

Mike Carberry  
Director  
Green State Solutions  
Iowa

Cristina Stella  
Staff Attorney  
Animal Legal Defense Fund  
National

Dr. D.M. Wirth  
Co-Chair  
Boone County Farmers and Neighbors  
Iowa

Hannah Connor  
Senior Attorney  
Center for Biological Diversity  
National

Mark Kastel  
Executive Director  
The Cornucopia Institute  
National

Jean Lappe  
Member  
Des Moines County Farmers and Neighbors  
for Optimal Health  
Iowa

Steven Eatough  
Vice President  
Door County Environmental Council Inc.  
Wisconsin

Adam Kron  
Senior Attorney  
Environmental Integrity Project  
District of Columbia

Lisa Archer  
Director of Food and Technology Program  
Friends of the Earth  
National

Stacia Clinton  
National Director, Healthy Food in Health  
Care Program  
Health Care Without Harm  
Virginia

Ronald J. Wyse  
Team Leader  
Henry County Farmers and Neighbors  
Iowa

Ben Lilliston  
Director of Rural Strategies and Climate  
Change Institute for Agriculture and Trade  
Policy Minnesota

Sue Dinsdale  
Executive Director  
Iowa Citizen Action Network  
Iowa

Rita McDonald  
Member  
Iowa County Farmers and Neighbors  
Iowa

Bob Martin  
Food System Policy Program Director  
Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future  
Maryland

Bob Lacourciere  
Officer  
Lake Country Clean Lakes and Water  
Advocates  
Wisconsin

Tim Gibbons  
Communications Director  
Missouri Rural Crisis Center  
Missouri

Denise Richards  
Vice President  
Nebraska Communities United  
Nebraska

Melinda Suelflow  
Campaign Organizer  
Organic Consumers Association  
National

Richard Nance  
Chair  
Howard County Democrats  
Iowa

Pam Mackey Taylor  
Acting Director  
Iowa Chapter of the Sierra Club  
Iowa

Edith M. Haenel  
Founder  
Iowa Citizens for Responsible Agriculture -  
Worth County  
Iowa

Diane Rosenberg  
President and Executive Director  
Jefferson County Farmers & Neighbors, Inc.  
Iowa

Lynn Utesch  
Founder  
Kewaunee CARES  
Wisconsin

Ben Anderson  
Policy Organizer  
Land Stewardship Project  
Minnesota

Valerie Baron  
Staff Attorney  
Natural Resources Defense Council  
National

Sharon Donovan  
Co-chairman of the Board  
Occupy the World Food Prize  
Iowa

Allen Smith  
President  
Partners for the Future: Dickinson County  
Land, Air and Water  
Iowa

Andrea Miller  
Executive Director  
People Demanding Action  
National

Donna Smith  
Executive Director  
Progressive Democrats of America  
National

Maria Elena Bejarano  
Member  
Rio Valle Concerned Citizens  
Anthony, NM

Matthew Starr  
Upper Neuse Riverkeeper  
Sound Rivers  
North Carolina

Mary Dougherty  
President  
Sustain Rural Wisconsin Network  
Wisconsin

Scott Beckstead  
Rural Affairs Director  
The Humane Society of the United States  
National

Kelly Hunter Foster  
Senior Attorney  
Waterkeeper Alliance, Inc.  
National

Edith Haenel  
Founder  
Worth County Progressives  
Iowa

Susan E Kolbe  
Vice President  
Poweshiek CARES  
Iowa

Jessica Culpepper  
Food Safety & Health Attorney  
Public Justice  
National

Gail Philbin  
Director  
Sierra Club Michigan  
Michigan

Jan Danilson  
Southern Boone County Neighbors  
Iowa

Michael Delaney  
Chair, Raccoon River Watershed Association  
Ag Advisors  
Raccoon River Watershed Association  
Iowa

Marjorie Van Winkle  
Secretary/Treasurer  
Walnut Neighbors - Jefferson County  
Iowa

Jan Corderman  
Leadership Team Member  
Women's International League for Peace &  
Freedom  
Iowa