

ORGANIZATIONS UNITED FOR THE ENVIRONMENT (OUE)

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ORGANIZING AGAINST POLLUTERS A MANUAL FOR GRASSROOTS ACTIVISTS

OUE is a grassroots environmental organization operating mostly in the Central Susquehanna Valley. It originated in 1975 when local citizens tried unsuccessfully to block a county landfill, and in the early 1990s OUE led a successful resistance to the siting of a huge hazardous waste incinerator just down the road from the landfill. Since the mid-1990s, OUE has worked with several citizen groups to organize resistance to the spread of polluters such as landfills, tire burning plants, radioactive waste dumps and, most recently, animal factories. (OUE's history and recent issues of its newsletter are on its web site.

The OUE Board decided to prepare and to distribute this manual because our experience, and that of the groups we have worked with, tells us in that resisting polluters there are some actions, and a sequence of those actions, that tend to work better than others. That experience has also taught us that the rules for this kind of organizing are not written in stone, and there is no substitute for your imagination and grit in fighting back.

We are distributing this manual especially for people who, as an example, wake up one day to the news that a multinational meat processing company has contracted with a local farmer to raise 5,000 hogs across the road from their children's school. If this sort of thing happens to you – and in our area it is happening to more and more people every day – what in the world can you do? We hope that this manual will help you to answer that question.

1. Finding out the Bad News

Often, you will be among the last ones to find out that a potentially unwelcome operation is heading your way. As an example, OUE has been working with people fighting a chicken factory who discovered on a Thursday that the next Monday its township zoning board was going to decide, without a previous public hearing, whether to allow a farmer to raise 100,000 chickens in the middle of their rural, residential area. It can be, and typically is, a genuine shock to the system. So, Rule One is this: Don't panic! Rule Two, paraphrasing the old Wobbly organizer, Joe Hill: "Don't moan, but get organized!" Rule Three: "Dig in, with tenacity!"

2. A Note on the Proper Attitude: Get Angry and Get to Work

The first wave of an abiding anger will likely engulf you at, say, a meeting of a township zoning board assessing a permit for a monster hog factory within sight of your home. At that meeting, someone -- most likely a company official -- will utter something like this: "Me and my people are here to get a permit to put up barns close to where you all live. And, we're going to fill them with 4,000 lovely little pigs. And, it's going to be good for everyone in America. Of course,

some people say it might stink up your place, make you and your kids sick, and reduce your property's value. But, don't worry, they're lying, and I'm not. And, besides that, all the politicians are on my side."

Now, if your anger doesn't prepare to fight back, eventually you and the other nice guys will wind up with all the manure, garbage, radio-active wastes, rats, swarms of flies, and other vermin in your backyards. Corporate polluters scour the countryside for communities, especially ones close to major highways, where they think good hearted people live who won't oppose them. They also look for weak or nonexistent ordinances/zoning laws. And, even if your township has sound ones in place, supervisors are likely to tell you that they don't apply because regulatory requirements have been met, or give you other reasons that their hands are tied.

It's true that sometimes these struggles are resolved by lawyers in a courtroom. But, both in those cases, and in the more typical ones that don't get to court, winning depends upon your ability to make the owners of the polluting company realize that they made a costly mistake in coming your way. In other words, you need to make a stink that's greater than the one they're trying to bring into your back yard. You have to say to yourself, to the polluter, and to the politicians that, "I will not let you make me or my children sick! Or ruin my neighborhood!"

3. Rousing the Neighborhood

Right off the bat, make up a simple, one-page flyer calling for an organizing meeting at some convenient location (your house, if necessary). Schedule the meeting as soon as you can and get others to help you circulate your flyer widely, including putting it up at post offices, banks, and other public locations. In your flyer emphasize, especially, how your neighbors' interests are threatened by the operation. Write a letter to the editor of local newspapers that briefly describes the situation, announces any hearings or planned meetings, and urges everyone to attend. **(At the end of the manual we've attached two such flyers that local groups used in the early stages of their resistance.)** A last word here is to avoid alienating your allies when they disagree with you about what actions to take. Be patient with everyone except the bad guys. Your neighbors may not want to join you now, but they might change their minds if you get the message across successfully. Listen to each argument, at least once, so you can have a counter-argument for every dissenter. It's good practice.

4. Getting Organized

A. The First Meeting

The first meeting of your group will, possibly, be the most crucial one. Therefore, before you attend it, study the list below as a guide about what to do. The items on the list and their sequence are, of course, suggestive. But no part of the list is there without its having been recommended by someone with experience in grassroots organizing.

- Bring several yellow pads and some pens for sign-up sheets.
- Start the meeting by introducing yourself and others you've been working with. Circulate one the tablets as a sign-up sheet that asks for names, addresses (regular and

email), and phone numbers. Be prepared to keep the meeting focused on distributing information and planning actions, rather than on venting anger.

- Ask for a volunteer to be temporary secretary (recorder) and to take minutes of the meeting.
- Tell people what you know and ask for comments from anyone who has relevant information about the permit you're resisting. Again, try to discourage digressions..
- Decide on a name for your organization at this first meeting.
- Get a volunteer to act as temporary treasurer. Ask if it's alright with the group for the treasurer to open a bank account and post office box in the group's name.
- Take up a collection for seed money and give it to the treasurer to deposit or to spend on start-up costs, such as for the post office box and for copying materials.
- Using sign-up sheets, ask for volunteers to be on working sub-committees for at least the following: research, fund-raising, newsletter, communication, and public events (and see # 6 below for a description of their likely duties).
- Ask that everyone sign up for at least one working sub-committee. Have the sub-committees meet briefly at the end of the meeting, and get a volunteer to act as chair for each of them. If possible, sub-committees should meet again before the next group meeting and be prepared to make a report at that next meeting.
- Urge the newsletter sub-committee to bring to the next meeting a draft of a 2-4 page newsletter with the latest news.
- The research sub-committee needs to look for three kinds of information. The first relates to the legal aspects of the permit being sought. Here's an excellent suggestion from a group that fought a landfill expansion: "In our experience, we made certain that someone first read everything that existed relating to the actual permit. We followed that with having persons who had some background on the subject to go to the office that was considering the permit request, re-read it and write down pertinent questions about the permit application. Fortunately we had some engineers that proved very helpful."
- Second, the research committee needs to look into the health and safety aspects of the project you are resisting. The internet is the best place to start such a search.
- Third, the research group needs to find out all it can about the corporation behind the polluting operation. Who are they and where are they located? What is their environmental record? In short, see if you can find the money trail and then follow it. In these battles, there are always people wanting to make a killing by maybe killing you, so in order to fight them best you need to find out all you can about them.
- Ask if anyone knows of local experts -- especially scientists and doctors -- friendly to your side. Get volunteers to contact such experts to ask them to help with the research, make a brief presentation at the next meeting, or be witnesses at public hearings.
- Agree to start a paper trail. Urge everyone who discusses the permit -- by phone, email, or in person -- with a public official or the polluter to record the date, the person talked to, and a summary of the exchange. This paper trail will be crucial to your research, public hearings, and to a trial, if it comes to that.
- Plan the next meeting, ideally no longer than a week away. As you get started you will need to meet often to get things going. Assuming you are the temporary leader of the group, give everyone your contact information and urge them to send you what they consider important agenda items for the next meeting. Find a place – a church,

someone's house, a school room – where you can meet regularly. Settle on a place and a time (every Sunday at 3:00, for example) and don't change it unless you absolutely must.

B. Second Meeting

- Get the meeting started promptly, and send around another sign-up sheet. Have the temporary secretary read minutes from the last meeting, and have the temporary treasurer make a report.
- Pass out copies of an agenda that you've prepared and brought to the meeting. Stay on the agenda as much as is possible, suggesting that there will time at the end of the meeting for issues not on the agenda.
- Discuss ways the group can get new members to the meetings.
- Elect permanent officers. (Pres., Vice-Pres., secretary, treasurer, e.g..)
- Get reports from sub-committees, and recruit all new members to one of them.
- Listen to your experts, if any of them came to the meeting.
- Leave time for brief meetings of the sub-committee.
- Agree to the time and place of the next meeting.

5. Get a Lawyer

You can be fairly certain that, whatever the specific details of your struggle, it will go better with regular counsel from a knowledgeable attorney. Pennsylvania laws are almost always stacked against regular citizens who are fighting polluters. For example, laws regulating animal factories were written to encourage their expansion and to block the opposition. You will likely face resistance in getting a fair hearing of your concerns at every level of government: local, county, state, and federal. Lawyers can navigate these tricky waters better than the rest of us, and possibly you'll have a willing and ready attorney in your group. But, this is not typically the case, and paying for lawyers and other experts will probably be your greatest expense. Also, attorneys with experience in these fights are rare in our area, so check with OUE for a list of such attorneys. Be sure to have group representatives interview the attorneys before anyone gets hired.

6. The Main Thing: Permanent Working Subcommittees

As you go along, make sure everyone is on at least one subcommittee. No matter how small the subcommittees, you will get a lot more work done by this division of labor. You will also generate in-house experts who get that way by focusing all their attention on their part of the problem. Typically, the most important subcommittees and what they do are as follows:

Research. Regarding legal issues surrounding the permit being sought, if you have an attorney, he or she can best determine the answers to legal questions. Until you get an attorney, do it yourself by going to the relevant public officials to seek the information you need. This process can be made difficult by township supervisors and their solicitors who have already concluded that the laws prevent them, and you, from doing anything to stop the permit. Yet, despite this barrier, you or your attorney absolutely must familiarize the group with the relevant local and state laws, and it must be done quickly.

Concerning the polluter's threat to local health and safety, the most useful information will likely be in articles from newspapers, magazines, and academic periodicals. Try to develop the habit of making a few copies of really informative articles. You should distribute these to your members, the media, your attorney if you have one, and to public officials who will consider the permit. Always include the source, title, author, and date of the article.

Newsletter. As soon as possible, you need to get out a newsletter, labeled #1, with your group's name on it. The newsletter is crucial to inform the group and the neighborhood of your research, to announce meetings, fund raising events, and any other relevant public event. These days, every group will have members who can design and write an effective newsletter, and plenty of others who can distribute it. Be sure the newsletter gets to local businesses, the media, churches, and other potentially interested parties. Put a premium on accuracy, clarity, and overall appearance, and then put out your newsletter regularly and promptly. Both of these are crucial in gaining your readers' confidence.

Fund Raising. Simply put, the more money you raise the better your chances of prevailing. In addition to passing a hat at all the meetings, get volunteers to canvass the relevant neighborhoods with an information sheet seeking members and money. After that, it's the old standbys: games of chance (usually with the need of a county permit); auctions; bake sales; yard sales; soliciting from local businesses that might be affected; and whatever else comes to mind that is both legal and not offensive. Your treasurer should keep very careful records, and if it looks like the group is going to be around for a while, consider applying for tax exempt status. This takes time, sometimes a few months, but it's worth checking out.

Communication. This sub-committee will be charged with getting your word out to the public, directly and through the media, and beyond what's in your newsletter. Make up a "media list" from the internet where all media outlets have web pages with contact information. For each outlet, get the name and email of an individual, such as an editor, a reporter you know or have heard of, or someone else. These days, almost all of them will want to hear from you through email. Using the media list, you should get in the habit of issuing one page press releases about events and important meetings. **(An example of a press release is attached at the end.)** Email press releases to your media list, and then follow up with a phone call in a day or so to answer any questions. This process provides the kind of attention your group needs, and if you stay on it soon interested reporters you've educated about your issue will be looking for you.

Public Events. There are two kinds of public events that you need to worry about. The first is any public meeting of local, county (including soil conservation districts), state, or federal officials relating to the permit you are resisting. Most typically, these meetings will involve township supervisors or zoning boards, or the DEP. Prior to these meetings, plan carefully how your group will participate. The bigger the crowd you can get, the better, both as a political statement and because a big turn-out increases the group's confidence and energy. Above all else, have at least some people there who know the issues and who are not afraid to talk about them in what can be an intense and confrontational setting. Most meetings allow a period for public comment but it is often wise to have a spokesperson(s) from the group or other specific speakers (expert testimony) put on the agenda to assure that sufficient time is allowed to get your

point across. It's also important for people to stay until the end of the meeting to make sure that "they" don't run one by after "the opposition" has left.

The second kind of public event, aside from fund raisers, is a demonstration that you imagine, plan, and carry out yourselves. For example, you might want to demonstrate inside or outside the offices of the DEP or the township supervisors; before or during public hearings; or outside the home of the president of the corporation that owns the 100,000 chickens headed for barns across the road. Whatever you do, there is no substitute for careful planning; really careful, as in military maneuvers. The first job of the sub-committee will be to make a list of every single thing that needs to be done in order to accomplish the goal of the event. At the next group meeting the subcommittee should get a volunteer for every one of those things that needs to be done. It should then make up a list of these tasks, and who is supposed to do them, and make everyone a copy. This process will maximize accountability, something crucial to a successful event. If it comes to the need for civil disobedience, you should get advice from people who have already organized those kinds of demonstrations. Check with us at OUE.

7. Settling in for the Long Haul: Only a Few of You Will Do Most of the Tasks So Get Over it and Get to Work

These environmental fights finally tire out everyone involved, and there are two aspects of this dragged-out process worth remembering. First, time will appear a genuine enemy on that day you discover that last week your township supervisors, without reasonably notifying the public, okayed a permit to locate two huge gas storage tanks across from your kids' school. However, once you begin to contest rulings and make yourself a political presence, time can actually become your friend. As an example, if Hatfield meat contracts with a local farmer to build a hog factory, that farmer will have to borrow hundreds of thousands of dollars, and pay interest on it, to build the barns and other necessary equipment. This means that delays in the review process, the most important being those you can create by appealing every ruling that goes against the group, can end up being the key to your success.

Second, time can be your enemy if you get dragged down, personally. In grassroots groups some people will do the bulk of the work, and put up the bulk of the necessary money. Many others, however, will sit and watch it all happen. If you are one of the core workers, the best way to minimize the resentment you will surely feel is to be as imaginative as possible in figuring ways to get others to help out. Then, if all else fails, as it often does, do it yourself. The experience of grassroots organizing reveals again and again how much can be accomplished by just a few people if they (1) decide that they are not going to lose and (2) work like hell *without resentment* toward those who won't, can't, or don't know how to do anything to help.

9. Contacts

As soon as you can, seek advice from anyone you think might help. The list below is a place to start.

Community Environmental Legal Defense Fund. (<http://www.celdf.org>). CELDF is directed by Tom Linzey, Esq. Its principal work is to help citizens get their townships to write zoning ordinances that regulate the operations of all corporations within their borders. CELDF also holds regular sessions of its “Democracy School” which, among other things, teaches people ways to take back power in their own back yards.

Environmental Attorneys. Contact OUE. We will connect you to members of groups we have worked with who can give assessments of the available local environmental attorneys.

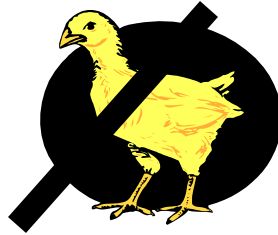
Global Resource Action Center for the Environment (<http://www.gracelinks.org>). GRACE is an invaluable source for research on animal factories, and its director and staff are accessible by phone and email for specific questions and, possibly, as expert witnesses.

Pennsylvania Environmental Network (PEN) (<http://www.penweb.org>). On Pen’s website, check out “Issue Teams,” which will connect you directly with people familiar with the kind of polluter you’re resisting.

Pennsylvania Farmers Union. The PFU is an organization of small-scale farmers, is strongly committed to sustainable agriculture, and has been an ally with OUE in its opposition to animal factories. Its state president, Larry Breech, is greatly knowledgeable about these issues, and he is available at the PFU office, 570 764 4215.

This manual was prepared in January 2006 by the following OUE members: Linda Godfrey, Sally and Thomas Lauver, Darlene McBryan, Charles Sackrey, John Walker, K.B. Yerg, and David Young. It will be updated as we learn more about how best to do this kind of organizing.

**On the next three pages are examples of two flyers
And one press release used by local groups.**



November 24, 2004

To our Neighbors in White Deer and Kelly Townships:

A group of concerned area residents is voicing opposition to the proposed White Deer Factory Farm to be located on the property of Emanuel L. Esh - 207 Millers Bottom Road, Lewisburg (former Wagner Farm).

To show our opposition to this “chicken factory farm” in White Deer Township we have organized a group, and anyone who is concerned about the environmental health and safety impact of this operation on yourself and your family can join us. The name of this newly formed group will be – Don Snyder White Deer Chapter of OUE (Organizations United for the Environment). We have also hired an attorney to protect our water, soil, health, and property values. Although legal fees are very costly, with approximately 122 homes in the area surrounding the Esh property, if every family pledges approximately \$100.00, we will have sufficient funds to cover the costs. As a chapter of the main OUE organizations, any donations to the group will be tax deductible and you will receive a receipt for your donation.

For additional information, please contact Darlene or Bob McBryan at 568-0955. Or send e-mail to: dmcryan@bucknell.edu or bobmcryan@yahoo.com.

Thank you!

Members

Don Snyder White Deer Chapter of OUE

Darlene McBryan, Chair Bob McBryan, Co-Chair

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.” – Margaret Mead

Don Snyder White Deer Chapter of OUE, P.O. Box 222, West Milton, PA 17886

September, 2002

**TO THE RESIDENCES OF DERRY,
ANTHONY AND LIMESTONE
TOWNSHIPS**

**PLEASE ATTEND THE DERRY TOWNSHIP
SUPERVISORS MEETING ON SEPTEMBER 10TH AT
7:00 P.M. TO OPPOSE CORPORATE HOG FARMS
IN YOUR BACKYARD.**

A grass roots organization, "Montour Citizens For A Clean Environment" (MCCE) has been organized to protect the health, safety and the welfare of this beautiful area. MCCE has been formed to prevent corporate hog factories from setting up shop in our backyard with no concern to your health, the environment and your property values. As a farming community we understand proper stewardship of this area's unique valley and the need to maintain it for future generations. We do not need the empty promises of corrupt corporations who have no concern for you. (i.e. Wenger Feeds and its subsidiaries)

The ill effect of corporate hog farms keeps accumulating as their history unfolds. Reviewing what has taken place in North Carolina as one example in the past years easily identifies the history of corporate hog farms. The following is a list of what you will expect if these corporate hog farms get a foothold in your back yard.

1. **Basic Rights**, Only a minority of people are for these farms, thus when they come into being they take away your right to clean air and water. Not only do you have to contend with foul air chances are great that you will have to filter your drinking water and/or buy bottled water. The contract farmer or the corporation will not financially assist you. The 4200 hog farm proposed for Deny Township will use in excess of 34,000 gallons of water a day. In regards to manure, this 4200 hog farm will generate more than 2 million gallons of antibiotic and steroid ridden slurry to be spread in your neighborhood.
2. **Outside owners**. Factory hog farms are owned by absentee landlords who gather the profits without experiencing any of the costs associated with the environmental effects, and they evade any liabilities in years to follow.
3. **Property values**. Within a 2 mile radius of any factory hog farm property values historically are reduced considerably, it has been reported as much as 30 to 40%.
4. **Fouls the air**. The horrendous odor of these concentrated hog farms will carry for miles. The smell comes from the lagoons and the spread of the manure in high concentrations on the fields. The smell of over 2 million gallons of manure will be spread in your neighborhood. It makes life unbearable.
5. **Water Contamination**. Leaking lagoons will contaminate water supplies and streams. Leaking lagoons may not happen for five to ten years but it will happen. The process of spreading 2 million gallons of manure will certainly reach the local waterways which is very detrimental to the aquatic life and your water resources. And, again the contract farmer and the corporation will not share the expense to rectify your problem.
6. **Township Revenue**. Historically very little revenue is generated for the township that the farm is built in. The majority of corporate hog farms are supplied their feed from outside mills usually owned or partially owned by the corporation who owns the farm contract. Little revenue and new employment opportunities are generated for the township.

The problems of corporate hog farms are more complicated than simply described above. If you wish to learn more or would like to support the MCCE, we meet every Wednesday night and we would be happy to have you join us. We need volunteers and donations. Call 742-4910 or 437-2482.

The MCCE is working in conjunction with the Organization United for the Environment (OUE) and GreenWatch, Inc. The OUE and Greenwatch, Inc. are state and national organizations that have done extensive research on corporate hog farms on a national level.

Don Snyder White Deer Chapter of OUE
P.O. Box 222
West Milton, PA 17886

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contacts: Darlene and Bob McBryan, Co-Chairs
(570) 568-0955

WHITE DEER AND KELLY TOWNSHIP RESIDENTS CRY FOWL

Lewisburg, PA – August 10, 2005

The Don Snyder White Deer Chapter of OUE, a chapter of Organizations United for the Environment, is local grass roots citizen organization that was formed in October of 2004 when local residents learned that a property owner who recently moved into their neighborhood on Millers Bottom Road was planning to construct a large poultry operation to house 90,000 chickens, in three barns on just 70 acres of land. The group comprised of residents of White Deer and Kelly Townships, is a melting pot of Union County citizens – young mothers with children, senior citizens, residents with health conditions, such as asthma, that will be affected by this operation, and homeowners who worry about a decrease in their property values, the quantity/quality of their water, the noxious smells emanating from the barns, an unnatural invasion of insects or vermin in the neighborhood, noise/air pollution, and increased large truck traffic on country roads. These concerns are all valid and should be addressed by local government before this type of operation can be approved. The homes that are located on the four roads surrounding the proposed animal factory are zoned rural residential, and woodland. This operation will affect approximately 122 families who live in close proximity to the construction site. The group is NOT opposed to family farming - many of the local residents either have been raised on family farms in the immediate area or they have purchased their land for their homes from family farmers, and they DO understand the financial difficulty many family farmers face in today's economy. Most of the residents have also lived in this neighborhood for many years. The group DOES object to this large animal factory because, in the group's opinion, this is not farming and should not be allowed to exist in the center of a predominately residential area.

The members of the Don Snyder Chapter of OUE have been opposing the construction of this large animal operation for approximately nine months. The group recently learned at a White Deer Township Supervisors' meeting in June that all of their concerns were never taken into consideration and the construction of the operation had been approved by the supervisors, who totally ignored the ordinances in the township that charge the supervisors with protecting the health and welfare of the local citizens. And although the group had 30 days to appeal the decision, construction on the project began only two weeks after the decision was made.

Attorney Julie Steinbacher of the Steinbacher Law Firm in Williamsport, legal counsel for the Don Snyder White Deer Chapter, has filed a Writ of Summons in the Union County Courthouse and construction of the animal factory project has been currently halted while our attorney presents our appeal to the court.