



OUE

Update

A Publication of Organizations United for the Environment

The Task Force on Hog Factories

The rapid spread of hog factories in Central Pennsylvania threatens our health and our democratic rights. For that reason, OUE is now acting as an umbrella for a new organization, the "Task Force on Hog Factories," which will work in a variety of ways to stall their invasion of our area. Local organizations that are already engaged in fights with proposed hog farms, and that have joined the Task Force, include Concerned Citizens of Cleveland Township; Concerned Citizens of Nippenose Valley; Concerned Citizens of Snyder County; and Montour Citizens for a Clean Environment. Also involved is the environmental consultant, GreenWatch, Inc.

On March 3rd, about thirty people representing six different groups met to launch the Task Force. Each group provided an update on the state of its own fight with a hog factory, and then together we

decided on the first steps we should take. These are to construct an expanding email list for quick contact, to develop ways to educate the public about the threat posed by hog factories, and to devise various ways to fund Task Force activities.

For the foreseeable future, the Task Force will meet with the OUE Board at the Board's regular monthly meeting. We hold these meetings the first Monday of every month, 7:00 p.m., at the Watsonstown United Methodist Church. The public is welcome.

This Task Force is intended as a loud signal that those of us in this region who oppose the spread of hog factories have joined forces and are ready to take on the factories as they appear on the horizon. Why do we care about "hogs and farms"? The next article seeks to answer that question.

The Case Against Hog Factories

OUE and others formed the Task Force on Hog Factories because we believe that a hog factory CAFO - Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation - is likely to produce foul odors, serious dangers to human health, an overall decline in the quality of life where it is located, and that new ones are typically forced upon their neighbors in thoroughly undemocratic ways. What follows are the details of these claims.

What is a Hog Factory?

As an example, one group in the Task Force, Montour Citizens for a Clean Environment (MCCE), opposes the siting of a hog factory in Derry Township. There, a local farmer seeks a DEP permit to contract with Hatfield Meat to house 4,360 hogs in two barns, 82 by 226 feet, in the middle of an agricultural area surrounded by small towns. The hogs would be owned by Hatfield Meat and would be fed with grain from Wenger Feed Mills. Each barn would sit atop a concrete lagoon that could store up to 693,010 gallons of manure. The hogs would generate about 2.5 million gallons of liquid manure each year, which would, in non-winter conditions, be spread on fields adjoining, or close to, the barns.

The farmer would be paid according to how many hogs he raises successfully from about 50 to 250 pounds. Hatfield and Wenger would seek profits from the sale of the hog meat and the grain. Neither of these firms, however, would incur *any* of the costs from the stench, the pollution, the health consequences, the decline in property values and in the quality of life that would be a consequence of the hog factory. These costs would be borne alone by the local people, and we will now describe their stunning enormity.

Hog Factories and Air Pollution

The most common complaint about hog factories is the *awful stench* that emanates from the confined animals, from the lagoons into which they are defecating, and from the manure when it is spread over the fields. Reflecting the range of complaints, one of our readers wrote that, "A recent spread of hog manure, over a mile away from Lewisburg, fouled the air inside the [local] hospital, creating misery for ill patients as well as staff, as well as the air in a nearby restaurant." As another example typifying these complaints, Minnesotan Julie Jansen, who lives within one mile of two hog factories, says, "We keep the windows and doors shut, the air conditioner running, but the smell gets in the carpet, the curtains, and the furniture. When it gets really bad, we spend the night in a motel. I've had to close my day-care business because nobody wants to bring their children here. We'd like to sell the house and move, but who would buy it?"

More serious yet, the stench that can ruin the neighborhood can also make people sick because it comes from a host of airborne toxics. The most prominent of these are grain dust and fecal matter, ammonia, hydrogen sulfide, carbon dioxide and carbon monoxide, all of which pose significant dangers to people who inhale them. According to a survey in Missouri by Family Farms for the Future, "People living downwind from hog factories can suffer a variety of psychological and physiological problems, such as depression, frequent vomiting and respiratory complications," and "more than half of the people living within two miles of mega-hog sites reported an increase in allergies, sinus infection, nasal blockage and a lack of energy." The American Lung Association, working with the University of Iowa, found that "Nearly 70 percent of swine

confinement workers experience one or more symptoms of respiratory illness or irritations and that 58 percent suffer chronic bronchitis.” (The previous three quotes in this section are from the following web site: <http://www.inmotionmagazine.com/hwenv.html>.)

Air pollution from hog factories can hurt businesses, too. At a January 2003 DEP hearing on the hog factory proposed in Montour County, the owner of a nearby company using a hydroponic method of producing lettuce argued that the factory’s wafting air would ruin his business by adding an unwanted flavor to his lettuce. He was also concerned that the factory eventually would pollute his shallow water well.

Hog Factories and Water Pollution

The lagoons holding the vast amounts of hog manure are subject to deterioration, shoddy construction, or worse. Manure from a leaking lagoon can find its way to ponds, waterways, and underground water. If the lagoon is overwhelmed, the consequence can be genuinely catastrophic: hurricane Floyd roaring through North Carolina burst or overwhelmed 51 lagoons, causing widespread water pollution and the death of over two million chickens and 30,000 hogs.

The second threat is runoff from the fields where the manure is spread. This runoff can filter to the water table below, and can find its way into any proximate standing water at lower elevations. The hog factory proposed in the Nippenose Valley would sit atop a giant outcropping of karst, a particularly porous form of limestone. This porosity means that a hog factory in that area would also threaten Nippeno Spring, a natural wonder that generates 25 million gallons a day and is the headwater to Antes Creek, the area’s principal waterway. The manure generated by a hog factory proposed in Cleveland Township would be spread on a field that is one thousand feet, and uphill, from the site of a well that supplies water for both Penn Township and Selinsgrove.

The point is that when people live close to over 4,000 confined hogs that make 2.5 million gallons of manure each year, it is simply a matter of time before the air and water that sustain those people get polluted; the only real question is whether the consequence will be a suffocating stench, the neighbors’ illnesses, a catastrophe, or all three.

Antibiotics and Meat from Hog Factories

In October 18, 2001, the *New England Journal of Medicine* printed a widely influential article by David White (and others), entitled, “The Isolation of Antibiotic-Resistant Salmonella from Retail Ground Meats.” This article concluded that:

Background Salmonella is a leading cause of food-borne illness. The emergence of antimicrobial-resistant salmonella is associated with the use of antibiotics in animals raised for food; resistant bacteria can be transmitted to humans through foods, particularly those of animal origin.

What’s the story here? At animal factories, to prevent the disease endemic to such confinement, the animals are fed enormous amounts of antibiotics, the same kind that we use for infections. In fact, according to Ed Lawrence, of the regional Otzinachson Group of the Sierra Club:

In the US, the amount of antibiotic and antimicrobials used in animal agriculture dwarfs the amount in human medicine. Doctors prescribe about 3 million pounds of antibiotics for human use each year and studies by the Animal Health Institute and the Union of Concerned Scientists estimate

that chickens, pigs and cows are fed between 18 to 24 million pounds. In other words, the three major livestock sectors consume 6 to 8 times more of these drugs. . . .than are used in human medical treatments. [This] amount has increased by 50% since 1985.

Ben Littleton, of the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, describes the medical consequences of feeding antibiotics to healthy animals:

Bacteria commonly found on supermarket chicken and poultry (salmonella and campylobacter) are getting stronger, developing resistance to many of the most valuable antibiotics — such as Cipro and tetracycline — used to treat humans. . . .When bacteria are resistant to antibiotics that doctors rely on for treating infections, it puts patients’ lives at risk by taking away a critical tool for recovery. These antibiotic resistant strains of bacteria are more potent, increasing the likelihood that you will become sick and stay sick longer than if exposed to nonresistant organisms. (*Live-stock Alternatives*, Sustainable Agriculture Network (SAN), October 2001.)

Hog Factories and Democratic Rights

Increasingly, large corporations are dominating the globe, our nation, our states, and our local communities. Resisting this trend, a coalition of environmentalists, farmers, unionists, and others recently joined hands to keep the PA House of Representatives from passing SB 1413. This bill, backed by the big meat and feed companies, would have made it illegal for townships to pass ordinances against hog factories and would even have subjected township supervisors to law suits brought against them by the big firms.

Here’s where we are. One day, you’re sitting on your porch, proud of your home and grounds, enjoying a scenic view of fields and hills and clean white farms. While you sip a cool drink you sift through the daily newspaper only to come across a notice in tiny print saying that a local farmer wants to bring four or five thousand hogs to live and to defecate close to your home, your well, your stream and your kids’ school. What kind of democratic rights, and what kind of liberty, do you actually possess if the giant corporations succeed in stripping from you and your neighbors the right to protect yourself from this kind of invasion?

A Note on Efficiency and Hog Factories

Since 1980, the number of hog farms in the U.S. has fallen from about 600,000 to about 150,000, while the amount of pork eaten in the U.S. has remained about the same. Defenders of corporate hog factories responsible for this decline claim that such factories are more “efficient” than smaller farms. *This is a dangerous myth.* The true costs of production from hog factories include those to the neighbors who bear the brunt of the pollution, contamination, increasing resistance to existing antibiotics, stench, loss of democratic rights, and declining property values. These kinds of costs are especially likely to be substantial in the case of hog factories, rather than smaller farms, and because they cannot easily be measured in precise dollars, they are simply ignored. As an example, what is the true cost to a family of buying and eating pork if doing so leads the children to ingest bacteria for which there are fewer medicines? And, how much do we add to the current cost of pork because it is being produced at the expense of the democratic rights of a growing number of the neighbors of hog factories? If all of these “external” costs of producing pork in hog factories — stench and disease from the air and water pollution, immunity to antibiot-

ics, and loss of democratic rights – were added up, we would more clearly see them as a prohibitively expensive way to get the pork on the table. Who would trade a cheap pork chop for your child's right to have effective medicine when he or she has a bad infection?

Conclusion

In summary, to build a hog factory anywhere close to where human beings live and work, or to any water source that they or others depend upon, is an assault on the rights of such people because these factories make life unbearable in the short run and actually threaten life in the long run. *Sources for this article are those cited in the text and the following two excellent web sites: <http://www.penweb.org/issues/hogs>; <http://www.farmweb.org>. For anyone doing research on hog factories, these two sites are a good place to start.* ∩

The OUE has a new updated web site. The site includes a history of OUE for those of you who don't know our origins and activities and the most recent issues of OUE UPDATE. We hope to provide updates about the Task Force and other OUE activities. We invite you to check it out at: <http://www.ouenews.org>.

A Good Model of How to Fight Back: Concerned Citizens of Nippenose Valley

The following update comes from the members of CCNV, a group that is now about a year old, and whose work provides a good model of how to go about organizing against a CAFO. CCNV also wrote to urge our readers to consider joining the Pennsylvania Farmers Union, which describes itself as "a grassroots organization dedicated to preserving the family farm and advocating for real economic growth for all Pennsylvanians." To learn more, contact PFU at: RR # 3, Box 724, Mifflintown, PA 17059, or at (717) 436-9330.

The CCNV is now one year old, and we are determined and stronger than ever. We've certainly had our ups and downs throughout the year. Protecting this beautiful valley remains our priority. We have gained new friends and allies in Farm Aid and OUE. We have agreed to work together with other groups opposing factory farms. It is important to share information to learn from others' mistakes and gains. It's great to know we are not alone!

We continue to hold community meetings to keep our Valley residents informed, and on January 29th we were honored to have State Representative Steven Cappelli as one of our guest speakers. He urged us to be aggressive and fight to keep local control. He promised to vote against any bill that would take away local control. We appreciate his support. Thomas Linzey, President of the Citizens Environmental Legal Defense Fund, also spoke to us. He gave examples of farmers who contracted with corporations to raise animals. The corporations dropped them after several years, forcing many of the farmers into bankruptcy. He also reminded us of our rights as citizens. He cautioned, "This is not a manure issue, or a land issue, or a zoning issue it's a rights issue. It's about community rights versus corporate rights." Kim Seely of Milky Way Farms, located in Troy, spoke about sustainable agriculture. (See milkyway@epix.net.) Kim certainly is a great example of farming done the right way!

We look forward to visiting his family farm in the future.

We are promoting locally grown meat and vegetable products. We are listing local farmers who raise beef and pork without the use of growth hormones. This gives people an opportunity to buy meat products not raised in CAFOs. The marketplace is the one place where we can hit these large corporations hard. They need to know that consumers do not want their steroid and antibiotic ridden products.

Three members of the CCNV, led by our chairman Dave Hallow, attended the 12th Annual Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture Conference held in State College on February 7th & 8th. We joined the over 1200 others that not only made it the largest gathering in the association's history, but also the largest ever to be hosted at the Penn State Conference Center. The entire conference gathered for the opening to hear several interesting speakers. Shon Seeley, agriculture student at Penn State, told us that he is forming a sustainable agriculture organization at the University. The keynote speaker, Mark Ritchie, clearly described the economic and environmental consequences of corporate agribusiness. We attended several workshops and met with others who are fighting to keep hog factories out of their community. The theme at the PASA Conference and for this year is *Local Food Systems, Local Decisions – In Search of True Security*. For more information see www.pasafarming.org

While at the Conference, we had the opportunity to speak with the Assistant Secretary of DEP and express our concerns with the deceptive tactics utilized by the State Conservation Commission during the public hearing on the Nutrient Management Plans. Our local Conservation District was incorrectly told that it could not consider our 1998 Township Ordinance that prohibits factory farms over our precious water supply. Both applicants proposed placing 5 million gallons of manure, the toxic by-product of 20,000 hogs, precisely where the law prohibits them! This deception led to the misguided approval of the Nutrient Management Plans and supported the filing of fraudulent applications with the DEP for the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination Permit. The CCNV has appealed the approval of those Plans to the State Environmental Hearing Board, and the DEP Permit Applications were rejected after we, along with our township supervisors, informed DEP of the errors contained therein. ∩

Tax deductible contributions may be made to CCNV by checks made out to OUE, with the "memo" listing CCNV, and mailed to us at P.O. Box 831, Jersey Shore, PA 17740.

The Alternative to Corporate Farming: The Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture (PASA)

We asked Gene Chenoweth, a retired professor, to write an article for this issue describing PASA, in which he is active. The article follows and Gene wrote that, "In preparing this piece, I consulted George DeVault's article in Mother Earth News for June/July 2002 and Brian Snyder's column in the Winter 2002-03 issue of Pas-sages."

Founders of PASA – the Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture – were pleasantly surprised when 500 people attended the first Farming for the Future Conference in 1992. At the time, Pennsylvania ag schools, state and federal departments of agriculture, machine designers, bankers, even farm publications, were enthusiastically oriented toward capital intensive agribusiness.

One founder recalls, "We had been derided by our state agriculture department, ignored by our extension agents and insulted by our state's primary agriculture magazine. Finding all that acceptance and support was exhilarating. I think it's still one of the primary reasons people attend the annual conference." (It is held at Penn State each February.) If members were pleased by that attendance, Harrisburg and Penn State were shocked by it. Farming's "powers that be" regarded Earl Butz's exhortation, "Get big or get out!" as common sense and inevitable. Capital intensive agribusiness was replacing small-time agriculture, "freeing" people from "dreary" farming chores for more "productive" pursuits. That was then, this is now.

PASA's 12th annual conference met at Penn State on February 7-8, 2003, with about 1200 attendees. The Secretary of Agriculture and the Dean of Penn State's Ag College not only came to extend greetings, their offices were major financial sponsors of the event. Brian Snyder, Executive Director of PASA, says it is important for officials to attend, "Not so much so you could hear them, but so *they* could see *all of you*." PASA is probably the best organized and most dynamic association of its kind, but it does not stand alone. At last year's Conference, John Ikerd, Emeritus Professor of Ag Economics at the University of Missouri reported, "There are so many conferences around the country that draw from 100 to 300 people, I couldn't even begin to count them. We are part of something important. There is a change taking place across America."

PASA membership is approximately 1300 today, about half of which are farmers. That mix enhances PASA's vitality and stimulates diversity in planning the conference, selecting speakers, and setting up 40-plus conference workshops. Keynote speakers have been diverse: Jim Hightower, William McDonough, Winona LaDuke, Mark Ritchie, Vandana Shiva – to name a few. Workshops range from how to start a small farm, legal concerns in direct marketing, nutritional benefits of pastured meat and eggs, composting for profit and the environment, globalization's impact upon family farms.

Besides the annual conference, PASA conducts about a dozen "field days" throughout the year. These programs enable producers to share experiences, demonstrate facilities, explain research projects, and unveil innovative procedures and equipment. They bring together novices, skilled practitioners, and consumers. They inform about value-added operations and utilization of niche markets. There are meetings between chefs, dietitians, restaurateurs and farmers – as well as market managers – to enhance consumption of locally grown farm-fresh foods. Consumer education, including risks of eating in the "fast food nation," together with delicious and healthful alternatives, are high priorities.

Shaping the goals and objectives for PASA's changing endeavors is an elected energetic 15-member Board of Directors. To coordinate varied demands and respond to growing inquiries, PASA headquarters in Millheim has a staff of four, plus regional program directors in Southeast and Southwest sections of the Commonwealth. The sometime-

newsletter has evolved into a 30-page quarterly of features, reviews and news, requiring a full-time editor and assisted from many contributing writers and artists.

Executive Director Brian Snyder saw something of a watershed in the scuttling of PA Senate Bill 1413 in Harrisburg last Thanksgiving. Following a flurry of intrigue for adopting a state provision to frustrate township attempts to regulate confined livestock operations, the House quietly dropped SB 1413. This meant Pennsylvania voters had succeeded where Iowa voters had failed! Legislators could not unilaterally turn the Commonwealth into an outpost of agribusiness. Brian argues that after "thousands of calls, emails, and letters from concerned citizens across the state, [legislators] also recognize there is a huge difference between farmers whose customers are Pennsylvania citizens (and voters!) and those whose clients represent more distant and disengaged interests." Brian was hopeful that "the dialogue that must now come will embrace not only diversity among farmers but also the needs and interests of communities in which farmers and consumers together dwell." It was a nice opening, but conversations may start uncomfortably and proceed haltingly, since Governor Rendell appointed Dennis C. Wolff, a personification of agribusiness, as Pennsylvania's Secretary of Agriculture.

The agribusiness focus upon "commodity production" is an outmoded creed. It is formulaic, unhealthy and chained to an entropy slide. It has proven environmentally, socially, and spiritually dysfunctional. It survives by virtue of massive subsidies. PASA's diverse members do not always agree, but they join together in support of their mission objective, which holds it is both necessary and feasible to "promote profitable farms, which produce healthy food for all people while respecting the natural environment." The fundamental principle of sustainable agriculture avows that land stewardship, environmental protection and profitability must be made to work hand in glove. Sustainable agriculture is not achieved by rote. It is crafted from knowledge, skill and experimentation – enabling humans to work in tandem with nature and one another. That's the crux of PASA's alternative, which they affirm as empirically testable – not simply an article of faith.

May we have your email address?

Please note on the donation sheet a request for your email address. Receiving it would allow us to contact you, as we sometimes would like to do, in between the four months that elapse between each issue of the newsletter. For example, the activities of the new Task Force on Hog Factories, discussed in this issue, will surely make it necessary to get out information to you and/or ask for your opinions or your participation in activities we expect to organize. You can send any opinions, information, or ideas to the newsletter email address, editor@ouenews.org. Giving us your email address is one way you can join the battle. We assure you we will use these addresses only for OUE purposes and that we will not share your email address with anyone.

OUE Publications Committee: Charles Sackrey, Editor; Linda Godfrey and Clyde Peeling, Contributing Editors; Bessie Bush, Distribution

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