



O.U.E.

A Publication of Organizations Dedicated for the Environment

CITIZENS FEND OFF CHICKEN FARM PROPOSAL

On November 12th, citizens in White Deer Township learned that a local land owner had withdrawn an application to build a factory farm where 90,000 chicks would be raised into broilers. Though they are not sure why he did this, it seems likely it was in response to an intensive three week campaign by his neighbors to keep out the chickens. This campaign demonstrates, as clearly as you're likely to see it, the possibilities inherent in people's ability to keep away animal factories, even though all the laws are stacked against them. Here are some details.

On Thursday, October 21st several residents in the border area between Kelly and White Deer Townships found flyers on their door announcing the invasion of three barns and 90,000 chickens in an area surrounded by about 125 homes. They also discovered that a Township Zoning Board meeting on the proposal would occur on the following Tuesday. In response, a dozen of them quickly began to organize a resistance, including meeting with OUE Board members, and a week later they established the "Don Snyder White Deer Chapter of OUE."

At the Zoning Board meeting about 75 people showed up, in a room designed for 26, almost all of them to oppose the factory. The president of Red Barn Consulting, the firm that wanted to construct this "concentrated animal operation" and was pushing the proposal with the land owner, told the crowd that its plan met all the conditions of the township zoning laws and ordinances. As is typical, he made this claim despite the fact that township ordinances preclude operations that "adversely affect the neighborhood" or have negative "odor effects on adjoining property!"

The White Deer Chapter opposed this application because its research revealed a huge volume of literature on the internet and in libraries confirming that these animal factories have substantial negative effects on the areas in which they are built. One particularly compelling source (and which we continue to recommend to our readers) was the American Public Health Association call last year for a moratorium on CAFOs until adequate research can be done to guarantee that they do not threaten human health and safety, particularly that of children. (You can see this document at www.apha.org).

The two people who led the White Deer group in its resistance are Darlene McBryan and Tim Swank. During the past three

weeks, both of them, with key help from other members, have spent day and night, before and after work, researching the potential hazards of chicken factories, looking for lawyers and expert witnesses, organizing their neighbors, raising money, educating themselves, and doing all the other things that you desperately need to do when one day you find a leaflet on your door announcing the imminent arrival of 5,000 hogs or 90,000 chickens.

Darlene and Tim, and their allies in White Deer, are not yet celebrating victory because Red Barn Consulting and the land owner can always submit a new application that will start the process all over. However, their spirited resistance for the past three weeks has given them valuable time to prepare for a second application, if it comes, or one from anyone else who wants to build an animal factory in their area. We, of course, will keep you posted. ♦

ALERT! ALERT! ALERT!

As we went to press, a friendly source who must remain anonymous told us that a mega corporation from Tennessee, "Heavenly Acres," wants to build a 20,000 hog-finishing factory "somewhere in Central Pennsylvania." The details are on our back page.

RENEWABLE ENERGY AND CONSERVATION (REC): AN UPDATE

In our last issue, we reported that we would be paying more attention to renewable energy and conservation because ultimately these are the only paths our society can take to maintain the health of the environment. Below are reports on two dimensions of that new direction.

Solar Water Heating System at Warrior Run School District

Recently the OUE Board set aside about \$5,000 to help to fund the demonstration model of a solar hot water system. We also began talks with officials at Warrior Run School District who had expressed interest in working with OUE to con-

struct such a system for part of their building complex. Once the system is up and running, the school will regularly schedule times when the public can inspect it and learn how such a system might work in their own homes or offices. School officials have been delayed in giving their attention to the project because of the start of the school year. Nonetheless, we are confident that we will be able to report progress in our next issue.

We thank all of the donors to our last issue for helping to make this project possible!

OUE's Energy Consultant: Solair Energy, Inc.

When we decided to give more attention to renewable energy and conservation, we checked out a number of regional companies that provided relevant equipment and information. After talking to several representatives of these companies, we decided to have an initial meeting with one of them, Pamela Downey. We found that she had a broad range of experience in the field, was easy to work with, and was quite generous in educating us about Renewable Energy and Conservation. For those reasons we have made her our informal adviser on such matters and, for example, she will work with us and Warrior Run School District when they install the solar water heating system.

For these same reasons, we want to bring her services to the attention of any of our readers who might be thinking of the REC path. We asked her to send us some notes about her background and the services she rendered. What follows is based on these notes.

Pamela owns and operates Solair Energy, Inc., on Route 14 in Palston, north of Williamsport. She founded the company in 1995 as "ED Associates Energy Services," after working at a county weatherization program for many years. It was there she learned the basics of energy conservation and building science. Solair, which she incorporated in 2004, has as its biggest customers utility companies that use private contractors and county agencies to perform government-mandated energy conservation programs. A small but growing segment of Solair's business comes from private energy auditing and solar energy installation.

By the late 1990s, Pamela had developed a growing interest in wind energy. And, because by 1998 Solair's bread-and-butter business of energy conservation had given it the financial base to expand into the tenuous waters of renewable energy, Pamela decided to attend a photovoltaic cell (PV) installation training in Massachusetts. This conference renewed her long-time interest in solar energy and convinced her that renewable energy technology had truly come of age.

Pamela was also convinced that REC was viable in the northeast and Mid-Atlantic States, not just sunny Florida or the windy plains. This sparked a passion to provide renewable energy services to north central Pennsylvania. Since 1998, Pamela and Solair employees have received additional solar and wind training at centers in Florida and New York, and from AWS Truewind and Bergy Windpower.

In 2000, Solair contracted with the Pennsylvania Energy Association to provide statewide training for solar installers for the

PA Renewable Energy Pilot Program, funded by four major electric utilities as a concession to deregulation. After a training program, Solair Energy performed site surveys and supervised installations of four photovoltaic installations and four solar water-heating installations to provide hands-on training for students. The Pilot program, which had all its training sessions within 50 miles of Williamsport, ran for two years and successfully installed dozens of photovoltaic and solar water heaters throughout Pennsylvania.

Solair Energy, Inc. is headquartered near the juncture of Lycoming, Bradford, Sullivan and Tioga counties, and has worked in 17 counties throughout central PA. Solair's projects in the local area have included an evacuated tube solar water heater in Pine Creek, a solar pool heater in Towanda and renewable energy systems for a super-efficient new home in Eagles Mere. Unfortunately, until Pennsylvania develops more financial incentives to help customers defray costs, the renewable energy market will not heat up. Nonetheless, as prices rise for gasoline and heating oil, and as electric utility rates increase, more and more people are thinking of renewable energy alternatives. For more information on these matters, contact Pamela Downey, at 570-995-5747. ♦

BUY FRESH, BUY LOCAL: AN UPDATE FROM THE ZIEGLER FARM

In this year's spring issue, we sent our readers a map and guide to small-scale farmers in the central Susquehanna region. We also had an article on one such farmer, Bucky Ziegler. We ask Bucky to send us an update on operations at his farm so that readers can learn something about what kind of farm it is and also something about how to get the good food produced there. Here is Bucky's update.

Greetings from Paradise Valley Organic Farm, Limestoneville, Montour County. For those of you who are unfamiliar with our operation, allow me to introduce our family farm. I, Abram (Bucky) Ziegler Jr., and my wife Sherry and our children own and operate this 270 acre certified organic, diversified crop and livestock farm. This productive farm, comprised of limestone, was originally purchased in 1967 by my late father, Abram Ziegler, and my mother Eleanor Z. Reimensnyder who still lives on part of the original land. I owe much of my knowledge of agriculture as well as many other areas to my Dad who was a student of the land and respected it with great reverence. His desire to improve the soil as well as conserve it was probably instrumental in bringing my thinking in line with biological, sustainable, and finally organic agriculture.

The path we at PVOF have chosen to take in agriculture has so many possibilities in our society today that the choices are staggering. Direct marketing, that is producing products sold to consumers directly, is the marketing method we have chosen to implement. The main enterprise of PVOF is certified organic livestock grains. Our specialty is chicken/poultry grain mixes. We cater to smaller operations that produce seasonal pastured pul-

ty, particularly broilers, although the demand for free range eggs has boosted the sales of our layer grain mash. Recent studies, showing the improved quality of free range eggs compared to confined layer hen eggs, have small scale layer producers scrambling to meet the demand for them. Many of our grain customers are not certified organic, but appreciate the local aspect of the grains and support our ideals to keep a handle on all the ingredients, especially the aspect of no by-products.

Along with the sale of organic grains, we also produce and sell organic hay, primarily to organic dairy farms in Central and South Eastern Pennsylvania. On years like 2004, excess shelled corn is sold to organic dairy farms as well.

Like many of the small, direct marketing farms that purchase our livestock grains, we too produce grass fed broilers, turkeys, eggs and pork. These products are sold directly from our farm and most are ordered in advance. We do usually produce excess and will have those available throughout the season. Currently broilers from October production are available first-come, first-serve. When they are gone, May will seem a long way off! Each Thanksgiving we provide turkeys, and if you have never tried a fresh, grass-fed turkey, you are missing a treat. The grass-fed pork for fall will soon be ready. It promises to be as good as it gets.

One of the encouraging aspects of organic/sustainable agriculture is being able to network with other producers of like philosophies. We have that privilege as members of Pennsylvania Association of Sustainable Agriculture. Many of our grain customers are PASA members and as such are very loyal and supportive of our efforts. They are great folks to fellowship with. I would encourage any of you folks who would like to support sustainable agriculture to join PASA. To quote Joel Salatin, "PASA offers a can-do market-oriented direct-under-the-fingernails approach that is both exhilarating and proactive!"

Thank you very much for your time. If you would like to know more about our farm and our products, you may contact us at PVPPFARM@aol.com, or call us at (570)-437-2156. ♦

A REPORT FROM THE FRONT IN THE BATTLE OVER LOCAL CONTROL

We asked Larry Breech, president of the Pennsylvania Farmers Union, to update our readers on the ACRE proposal by Governor Rendell. Though this proposal was aimed at reconciling the struggle in the state between traditional agriculture and factory farms, its idea of a Review Board has been highly contested. This Board, which would decide on disputes between farms/factory farms and neighbors, would be made up of one appointee by the governor, and the following officials, all currently supporters of factory farming: the Dean of Penn State's School of Agricultural Scientists, and the Secretaries of Agriculture DEP, and Community and Economic Development. Also, readers should know that ACRE comes on the heels of Governor Rendell's December 2003 veto of the H.B. 1222 that Breech

mentions. This bill would have virtually stripped from local supervisors the power to regulate any aspects of agriculture in their townships. See our web site for links to more information about this battle over local control. Below is Breech's analysis of this part of ACRE, and if you want more information, or to join his call to action at the end of the article, you can contact him at: 570 784-7807 or dablbb@nationi.net.

The battle continues. With great freedom comes great responsibility. We must exercise that responsibility now! Our freedom to determine the direction of our local communities is again under assault, not from an enemy outside our borders but from within. Our opponents are using rhetoric sounding benevolent and well meaning, and we as citizens must not be lured into the enslavement of this siren's song. Now is the time to measure up to our task.

Soon the Pennsylvania legislature will consider ACRE, a plan by the Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of DEP that aims to reconcile competing claims over agricultural land use. The proposal contains an exclusionary decision process that is a genuine threat to our local sovereignty. This threat is the five-member panel [Review Board] being touted as a visionary solution. They have explained the plan as being designed to reduce or eliminate court battles over who can control the economic and social direction of a local government entity as related to agriculture. The Department of Agriculture has deflected criticism by noting that panel decisions can be appealed to the court. However, this means that while citizens are paying with their taxes for the operations of the Review Board, they would also have to pay private lawyers to defend themselves against Board decisions that threaten their neighborhoods. This is a visionary solution?

The governor promised a "comprehensive and progressive solution" to the battle over agricultural land use last December when he vetoed the infamous H.B. 1222. Well, mister governor, let's have it. ACRE is not comprehensive or progressive when it ignores the concerns of the affected residents. Family farms and rural residents deserve better and we will work to achieve an acceptable long term solution and nothing less. We are asking that our concerns about falling property values and enjoyment be included in the final solution. Health issues and bio-security must be addressed to protect our families. ACRE makes little mention of how to address them. The matters of social responsibility and fiscal accountability are passed over and this is not acceptable. Recent USDA statistics made it clear that corporate interests have taken control of nearly 70% of swine production in Pennsylvania via captive production contracts and intertwined ownership agreements. These operations are profitable because they are not fully accountable for the air and water pollution, and other problems, they cause. Their owners take advantage of a situation they have created to enjoy increased profits and ever expanding control of the production and marketing capabilities in Pennsylvania. Whose interests are being represented?

Pennsylvania Farmers Union will continue to fight for local control. Our policy clearly states that we believe that factory farms

must be controlled at the local level. Family farmers must have equal access to the marketplace and their right to farm should be protected for normal farming practices. Local government is best able to deliver that umbrella of protection and we must fight to maintain our current structure of governance.

I am proposing a "Green Farm Coalition" of likeminded organizations with the goal of sustainable food production taking place in harmony with the rural community. Environmentally friendly and economically sound production agriculture practices will be used, and research projects designed for overall community enhancement must be advanced and given the highest priority. The model will feature practices that emphasize socially responsible agriculture combined with local resident support.

I invite you to join with us when the Green Farm Coalition introduces its proposals in Harrisburg and offers a truly comprehensive and progressive solution to the factory farm challenge confronting us. With many voices speaking as one we shall be heard over the redundant rhetoric of the factory farm proponents who would infringe on our freedom. ♦

The OUE Board meets at 7:00 p.m., the first Monday of every other month at the Watsontown United Methodist Church. In 2005, the board will meet in February, April, June, August, October and December. The public is welcome to attend our board meetings. ♦

HOG WORLD COULD BE HEADED OUR WAY!

As we were going to press we received the following report from a trusted source inside a state regulatory agency.

Clarence "Hog King" Cooper owns "Heavenly Acres," a Tennessee mega-corporation, and he recently met with Pennsylvania state officials to discuss locating a 20,000 hog finishing factory in the Central Susquehanna Valley. Heavenly Acres owns about four million hogs being raised at 293 factory farms in the U.S. and abroad. While the typical "Heavenly Factory," as Cooper calls them, has about 20,000 hogs, Hog King also owns "Jardin de Eden" in Argentina with 500,000 hogs housed in 200 barns on what was once range land. He boasts that Jardin de Eden generates about 250 million gallons of "sewage fertilizer" every year for use by neighboring farmers. The fact that both Cooper and his factory

are widely known behind his back as "El Bruto Apestoso" (The Stinking Beast) speaks clearly about the local view.

In order to pre-empt the usual critics of hog factories - whose analyses Hog King typically calls "dastardly lies" - he has come up with what he considers an ingenious plan to silence them. Therefore, while he is building his finishing barns, and on land adjoining them, he would construct a theme park called "Hog World." Cooper claims the park would generate considerable income for the area, drive up property values, and would be so much fun that the joyful laughter of the theme park's customers would silence his "ignoramus" critics. What features of Hog World would make it such a hit?

First of all, there are the rides, and the main one is "Pigs Can Fly," a gigantic roller coaster, shaped like a wallowing hog. Customers would ride in hog shaped cars that continually spin while emitting a variety of snorting, grunting, squealing, and other such noises. The ride starts with the cars taking a few turns around the Hog's torso. Then, they go inside the hog, via its hind quarters, there to travel in a maze of tubes called "Chitlin' City" at speeds up to 150 miles an hour. The hog-cars would then be shot out of the pig's mouth and onto another platform which slows them down and takes them into the foyer of a mammoth, 1,000 seat restaurant called "Fat City!"

Another ride, Hog King's favorite, would be called "Meat Hook." Riders would don water proof uniforms, be hung upside down on big hooks and, via a conveyor belt, sent through a simulated slaughter house. They would be hit in the skull with a big club (of foam rubber), hoisted down and, in a harrowing finale, have their throats "cut" (by a foam rubber knife). Cooper claims that while Meat Hook would be especially exciting and fun, it would also boost pork sales because riders will get a better understanding of how humanely the hogs are treated as they are transformed from squealing animals to iced down pork chops.

Along with the rides, Hog World would have a theatre showing such plays as a take-off on Shakespeare called "McHog," and a sizeable lake, "The Big Wallow," that would feature boats shaped like pork chops and sausages, rafts that look like bacon slices, and a huge paddle boat that would seat 300 and be shaped like a partially sliced Virginia ham. And, so on. ♦

Editor's Note: Counsel insisted that we point out that the article above is satirical.

OUE Publications Committee: Editor, Charles Sackrey; Associate Editors, Linda Godfrey, Dave Laidacker, and Clyde Peeling; Distribution, Bessie Bush and Linda Godfrey.

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