

R.O.A.D. Reviving Our American Democracy

Fight to Prevent CAFO Devastation in White Lake Area Goes to Court

ROAD (Reviving Our American Democracy) has filed a petition for a contested case seeking the reversal of a Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) wastewater permit granted to a proposed industrial pig farm in Claybanks Township owned by the newly-created company Flower Creek Swine, LLC. You can see the legal filing of the petition on our website, <https://roadrevivingouramericandemocracy.org/cafo-contested-case-petition-to-mdeq/>.

DEQ granted a Clean Water Act National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit to this proposed concentrated animal feeding operation (CAFO) on May 10, 2018 despite overwhelming public opposition and significant evidence of the CAFO's potential harms. This CAFO would be located just north of the White River Township border line less than a half mile from Flower Creek and within two miles of Lake Michigan.

CAFOs are industrial sized animal feeding operations in which large numbers of animals are held in closed indoor facilities to be fattened or "finished" as part of a larger meat production process. The proposed CAFO facility would house up to 4,000 hogs at a time, which arrive at the CAFO weighing 15 pounds and leave after 120 days weighing 255 pounds. It is anticipated that 2.9 groups of pigs will go through the facility each year and produce over 1.5 million gallons of waste that is all likely to be spread in the surrounding 5 mile area after being stockpiled in a cesspit under the CAFO barn. A new pork processing facility in Coldwater, owned by Clemens Food Group, eagerly awaits the arrival of Marsh pigs and may stimulate the construction of other such industrial farms.

Through its attorneys, Olson, Bzdok & Howard of Traverse City, ROAD argues that discharge of pollutants such as *E. coli* from the CAFO will harm Flower Creek, Little Flower Creek, Lake Michigan, and their associated watersheds. The CAFO's proximity to these waters make it inevitable that contamination will occur, resulting in closed beaches and possible human health consequences in violation of federal and state law. Beaches at Meinert Park already face regular closure due to *E. coli* and other contamination in Little Flower Creek. ROAD seeks to prevent additional pollution of Lake Michigan and destruction of the highly valuable tourist economy, along with adverse human health impacts and reduced real estate values. Studies of CAFOs in other locations have demonstrated these results (see links on our website, ROADrevivingouramericandemocracy.org), and there is no reason to believe the outcome here will be different.

This just occurred on the 4th of July

weekend: https://www.mlive.com/news/kalamazoo/index.ssf/2018/07/ecoli_outbreak_closes_swimming.html.

This could be our future if we don't stop CAFOS from coming to the White Lake Area. This could be our future if we don't stop CAFOS from coming to the White Lake Area. There are currently 149 CAFOS in the Southeastern Michigan Watershed, <https://www.sierraclub.org/michigan/cafo-map>.

ROAD also faults DEQ for allowing this CAFO to essentially shirk its responsibility to clean up after itself by sending all of its waste off site to undisclosed locations near the facility. Existing farms like Country Dairy already spread large quantities of manure in Claybanks Township, raising fears that the local market for manure is already saturated. Even more disconcertingly, DEQ has no idea where the waste will be sent and much less oversight when the waste leaves the CAFO. DEQ does not even have baseline knowledge of the waters it granted a permit to destroy, so the Big Flower Creek Association and ROAD have funded a Grand Valley State University study to assess the current level of *E. coli* in Flower Creek.

ROAD is disappointed that the DEQ ignored the opposition of dozens of nearby residents who will suffer the impacts of this CAFO. The White Lake area went down the wrong path decades ago when it allowed entry of two large chemical companies, resulting in massive toxic pollution to ground water and White Lake.

The clean up from these large toxic spills remains to be completed and will take several more decades. Permitting this CAFO to impair public waters is not only unlawful, it is a betrayal of the public trust.

Those interested in learning more or contributing to the effort to stop this CAFO from damaging the White Lake Area may read a variety of informative articles on ROAD's website and contribute to the CAFO resistance legal fund, <https://roadrevivingouramericandemocracy.org/donate-now/>. Legal fees have already reached over \$10,000 and our legal defense fund is nearly empty. Please consider what you can do and share our need with others who are concerned about Michigan's waters and the health of its citizens. Checks can also be sent to Reviving Our American Democracy at 10115 Dunewood Drive, Montague, MI 49437.

Water is life,

Dave Frederick, Chairman
CAFO Resistance Committee