

Manure Spills Harm Public Health and Cost TaxPayers' Money

Manure spills are threatening the health of Wisconsin's citizens and costing taxpayer's money by:

- *Polluting drinking water used by rural Wisconsin families and sickening children;*
- *Destroying our lakes, rivers, and trout streams;*
- *Undoing public and private financial investments in stream and lake improvements.*

But there is a solution: The Natural Resources Board will consider changes to the DNR's manure discharge rules for the largest Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations in Wisconsin in May in Sheboygan. These rules have the potential to reduce the contamination of rural wells and trout fisheries, but powerful agribusiness interests are fighting these rules.

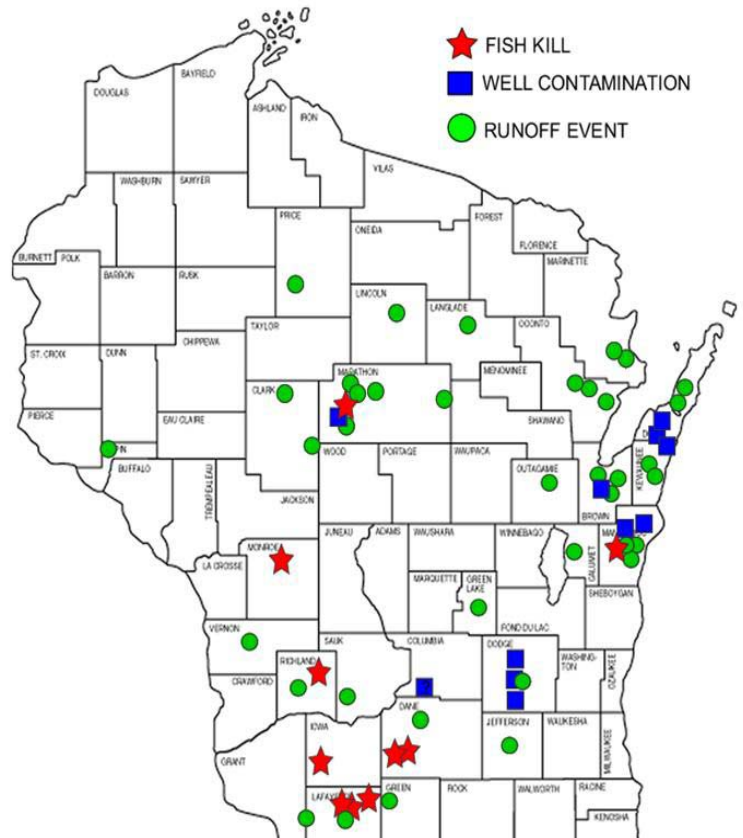
Contact Midwest Environmental Advocates at 608-251-5047 or www.midwestadvocates.org to learn more.

Manure Spills by CAFOs Can Pollute Drinking Water

In the first few months of 2006, **almost 70 wells in southern Brown County were contaminated with bacteria.** The contamination caused many people to become ill, suffering from stomach cramps, nausea, diarrhea, and chills.

Between 2004 and 2005, approximately **34 rural wells became contaminated** in northeastern Wisconsin from what the DNR believes was liquid or solid manure. In one case, a CAFO is alleged to have contaminated six wells in Dodge County, and in another case, a CAFO is alleged to have contaminated as many as 11 wells. The map to the left was compiled by the DNR.

Manure contamination makes people sick. Manure contains harmful bacteria that cause serious illness in people that unknowingly drink contaminated water. In some cases, children have gotten sick from drinking tap water that their parents did not know was contaminated with manure. One infant in Kewaunee County was rushed to a hospital for emergency care.



Manure Spills Can Destroy Rivers, Lakes and Trout Streams

- Manure contains ammonia – toxic to fish – that can destroy **nationally treasured trout fisheries**, as happened in Black Earth Creek in 2001 and the West Branch of the Sugar River in 2005.
- **Between July of 2004 and June of 2005**, there were **52 manure spills** that reached surface water and groundwater, and many more since then. In fact, the DNR believes that most manure spills go unreported. The map of fishkills to the right was prepared by DNR.
- **Of 52 manure spills**, many were caused by large and medium CAFOs and **most were linked to manure spreading on frozen and snow-covered ground**, when the risk of manure spills to streams and groundwater is highest.
- Further, many of the manure spills that caused fishkills or well-contaminations were allegedly from **manure applications that appeared to comply with appropriate standards**. This underscores the need to revise the standards and restrict manure spreading on ground that is frozen and covered with snow.

Manure Spills Are Expensive and Cost Taxpayers' \$\$\$

- The fishkill in the West Branch of the Sugar River **cost taxpayers and volunteers over \$1 million** in restoration efforts and DNR response costs.
- Families whose wells have been contaminated have incurred **medical bills, lost work wages** spent securing safe water for their families and dealing with the illnesses, and had to pay for **the cost of drilling a new, deeper well** with no guarantee that the well will not be contaminated by manure again.
- The cost of drilling a **new well** can be as much as **\$10-15,000**, a devastating financial burden for Wisconsin's working families.
- In response to recent well contaminations in Brown County, the legislature enacted a state law, Act 123, that would compensate rural families whose wells have been contaminated with e.coli bacteria. **Act 123 will cost taxpayers almost \$200,000 annually**.
- **Act 123** only applies to low-income people and even then **does not cover the entire cost of a new well**. Besides, this is just a short term solution. A longer-term solution is to prevent manure contamination through more protective standards.

Agribusiness Avoiding Accountability

- **The livestock industry is fighting new DNR rules** that would help prevent many of the well contaminations and fishkills around the state.
- **Blaming the victim** – Some in agribusiness have claimed that people deserved to have their wells contaminated because their wells are too shallow. **This is just wrong**. No one deserves to have their drinking water fouled and children's health put at risk.
- **Country living?** Some agribusiness advocates have said well contamination is just a part of country living in Wisconsin. But, **all Wisconsinites value clean water, good paying jobs, and most importantly, public health**. Having your kids get sick from manure should *not* be a part of living *anywhere* in Wisconsin.
- **"Acts of God"** – Agribusiness advocates claim that snow-melts and rainfall cause manure spills, and these weather events are "Acts of God." In fact, it was the CAFO that spread the manure in those dangerous conditions in the first place, and should not be allowed to blame God for a disaster could have been prevented through best practices.