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**Midwest Environmental Advocates, Inc. and Centerville CARES
Take Action to Protect Area Waters**

Cleveland – Centerville Citizens for Air, River, and Environmental Solutions (“Centerville CARES”) filed a lawsuit today challenging the Department of Natural Resources’ (“DNR’s”) finding that the expansion of Maple Leaf Dairy, a livestock factory in southern Manitowoc County, will not have significant environmental impacts on the fragile shoreland area of Lake Michigan.

Maple Leaf Dairy has proposed to construct a new facility in the Town of Centerville, and may significantly expand its operation over the next five years. The DNR only reviewed part of Maple Leaf Dairy’s operations and facility expansion plans in finding that the livestock factory would not create significant environmental impacts. As the result of its finding, the DNR has proposed to issue a water pollution discharge permit to Maple Leaf Dairy.

“My home and my values stand between Maple Leaf Dairy and Lake Michigan,” said Russ Tooley, President of Centerville CARES. “I and other members of Centerville CARES want a complete accounting of all of Maple Leaf Dairy’s expansion plans and the water and air pollution that will result. The DNR has turned its job into an exercise in paper-shuffling, refusing to give hard analysis to the complex problems presented by Maple Leaf Dairy,” Tooley added.

Maple Leaf Dairy currently confines 3,798 cattle at its Main Facility on County Trunk Highway X and five “satellite facilities.” In the past, Maple Leaf Dairy has submitted formal plans to the DNR to expand its operation to approximately 9,000 cattle.

Although the DNR has stated that Maple Leaf Dairy only proposes to expand its cow numbers through “slow growth and reproduction,” a report submitted by Maple Leaf Dairy to the DNR shows plans for the construction of two new manure pits and two expansive cattle confinement facilities that could confine significantly more cattle than currently concentrated at Maple Leaf Dairy.

“The DNR is trying to piecemeal its review of Maple Leaf Dairy’s expansion plans, rather than look at the whole picture,” said Andrew Hanson, a staff attorney with Midwest Environmental Advocates, Inc. a nonprofit environmental law center representing Centerville CARES.

“It is clear that Maple Leaf Dairy has plans for a significant expansion in the next five years. It is also clear that the DNR has refused to fully evaluate the air and water quality impacts of those expansion plans,” Hanson added. “How much more animal waste can Lake Michigan take? What are the risks of manure fertilizer runoff? How will the DNR evaluate the impact of odors and air pollution? We have no other choice but to go to court to get answers to those questions.”

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FAST FACTS:

- The DNR has scheduled a public hearing on its proposal to issue a water pollution discharge permit to Maple Leaf Dairy that would open the door to Maple Leaf Dairy's expansion plans. The hearing will be held on December 16, 2004 at 1:00 pm at Lakeshore Technical College, Lake Michigan Room, 1290 North Ave., Cleveland, Wisconsin.
- Midwest Environmental Advocates is Wisconsin's first and only non-profit, public interest environmental law center. Midwest Environmental Advocates provides legal representation and community organizing assistance to groups that are working to protect air and water resources. For more information, go to www.midwestadvocates.org.
- Centerville CARES is an unincorporated not-for-profit membership association whose mission is to promote policies that protect clean air, clean water, and sustainable agriculture in northeastern Wisconsin.
- Of the almost 17,000 livestock farms in Wisconsin, 130 are classified by the WDNR as Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations ("CAFOs"), or dairy livestock farms that have 700 or more milk cows. There are five CAFOs in Manitowoc County.
- CAFOs can increase water and air pollution, generating liquid waste from hundreds or thousands of cows that can accumulate in large open-air manure pits. Animal waste contains bacteria and other pathogens harmful to humans, in addition to nutrients like nitrogen and phosphorus that can cause algal blooms in waterways.
- The federal Clean Water Act regulates the water pollution generated by CAFOs, requiring CAFOs to prevent discharges of animal waste to rivers and streams.