

# Midwest Environmental ADVOCATES

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## **DNR May Lose Authority to Regulate Livestock Factories to Feds as Dairies Continue to Spill Manure into Wisconsin Waters**

As the state Senate considers legislation aimed at cutting the Department of Natural Resources' budget, Wisconsin may lose one of the most important water quality protection programs in the state: livestock factory waste management.

The legislation, known as the Budget Repair Bill, was passed by the state Assembly last week, and eliminates the DNR's livestock waste management program. All livestock waste permits, compliance programs, complaint follow-up, enforcement and technical assistance would be handed over to the federal government.

The Assembly's version of the Budget Repair Bill comes on the heels of Wisconsin's most recent catastrophic manure spill. According to the DNR, the Maple Ridge Dairy of Marathon County spilled thousands of gallons of manure from almost 1,000 cows into the Big Eau Pleine River on February 27. The violations by Maple Ridge include:

- Dumping manure on a field not authorized by the DNR for manure disposal;
- Dumping manure on frozen and snow covered ground within 200 feet of a stream;
- Dumping manure on steep slopes;
- Failure to report its annual manure disposal and other information.

The Department of Justice may pursue formal enforcement of the violations.

"I wish I could say this is an isolated example of manure mismanagement. Unfortunately, livestock factories in Wisconsin have a history of dumping manure into our public waters. It will only get worse if the DNR loses its authority to regulate livestock factories," said Andrew Hanson, attorney with Midwest Environmental Advocates, Inc., a non profit environmental law center.

A study of DNR records by Midwest Environmental Advocates revealed that from September 2000 to September 2001, eighteen mega-livestock operations in Wisconsin caused water pollution or increased the risk of that pollution through manure mismanagement. Water quality problems ranged from multiple manure spills to failing to establish a plan for managing manure.

Of the 18 facilities, nine of them had dumped manure into public waters or dumped too much manure on crop fields. Some of the government documents revealed multiple manure spills at individual facilities over the course of several days or months. Only one of the facilities was fined.