

# Midwest Environmental ADVOCATES

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## **Cambria Area Residents Challenge Wastewater Discharge Standards for Didion Ethanol Plant**

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*For Immediate Release*

Cambria, WI -- In an effort to fully protect Tarrant Lake and the Duck Creek Watershed from degradation, Cambria area residents have challenged the wastewater discharge permit Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources' ("DNR") issued to Didion Ethanol on April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2008, for its failure to comply with state and federal clean water law.

The wastewater discharge permit authorizes Didion to begin discharging up to 210,000 gallons per day of polluted wastewater from its new ethanol facility to a tributary of Duck Creek, less than one mile upstream from its confluence with Tarrant Lake in Cambria, Wisconsin. The citizens of Cambria have devoted time and resources to restore Tarrant Lake from a lake once dominated by algal blooms, silt and carp, to its former excellent fishery. The DNR recently awarded a lake planning grant to develop a lake management plan for Tarrant Lake, creating optimism among local citizens that the lake at the heart of their community will again provide an excellent recreational resource. The petitioners are concerned that Didion's wastewater threatens the future of Tarrant Lake, Duck Creek and its tributaries because Didion's water pollution permit does not sufficiently limit pollutants discharged from the facility, such as zinc, chlorine and arsenic. By law these pollutants must be limited to protect the fish and aquatic life and recreational use of these waters.

"From the start, we have been very concerned about the willingness of the DNR to ignore the water quality protection needs of Tarrant Lake," said John Domino, Cambria resident and one of the petitioners. "Tarrant Lake is a local treasure and it gives Cambrians something to really be proud of. The village has spent lots of money restoring this lake and the lake preservation committee just stocked it with 300 five to eight inch large mouth bass about two weeks ago," said Domino.

"None of us have confidence that Didion will meet the standards of their wastewater discharge permit because we have seen them continually violate their DNR-issued air permit for three years and DNR has not held them accountable," added Domino.

"Didion's discharge is very close to Tarrant Lake and by the time fish start to die or algae gets out of control, it will be too late for our little lake. Our lake needs some caring friends. Now is the time to make sure that Didion is held to higher water quality and monitoring standards. That is why we are seeking an administrative review to make sure the DNR upholds its duty to protect our waters," said Domino.

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## Fast Facts

- The DNR issues permits to discharge pollutants to Wisconsin waters through the Wisconsin Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (“WPDES”). These “WPDES Permits” are required to protect the water quality, aquatic life and recreational uses of the waters of the state.
- DNR recently awarded a lake planning grant sponsored by the Columbia County Land and Water Conservation Department in the amount of \$10,000 to develop a lake management plan for Tarrant Lake, including an assessment of nutrient sources and necessary best management practices. The lake has been restocked twice in the past two years: 450 adult blue gill and 2500 fingerling bass in 2007, and the above-mentioned 300 bass in 2008.
- DNR may not issue a water pollution permit that allows a facility to cause acute harm to fish and aquatic life in the receiving water.
- Didion WPDES permit authorizes Didion to discharge chlorine at 38 micrograms per liter (ug/L) as a daily maximum, equal to twice the concentration DNR has determined with cause acute harm-to fish and aquatic life..
- Didion WPDES permit authorizes Didion to discharge zinc at 690 micrograms per liter (ug/L) as a daily maximum, equal to twice the concentration DNR has determined with cause acute harm-to fish and aquatic life..
- In January 2008, DNR proposed to revise Wisconsin’s human health criteria for arsenic, a human carcinogen, from 50 ug/L to 13 ug/L to reflect a change in the maximum contaminant level from 50 ug/L to 10 ug/L. The Didion WPDES permit authorizes Didion to discharge arsenic at 50 micrograms per liter (ug/L) as a monthly average.
- 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](http://www.midwestadvocates.org).