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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”) took action to clean up streams in southern Manitowoc County and Sheboygan County today when it announced its intent to take Maple Leaf Dairy, Inc. to court after 60 days unless it takes steps to prevent discharges of excess animal waste into public waters.

Maple Leaf Dairy, Inc. houses almost 3,800 cattle at its concentrated animal feeding operation in southern Manitowoc County in the Town of Centerville just one and a half miles from Lake Michigan. Maple Leaf Dairy, Inc. produces over 24 million gallons of liquid animal waste annually, enough to fill about 30 Olympic-sized swimming pools.

Centerville CARES’ action comes at the heels of a local effort by Centerville CARES, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (“WDNR”), and local volunteers to monitor water quality at sixteen sample locations on Point and Fisher Creeks in Manitowoc County. Results showed that fourteen of the sixteen sample locations would have been closed as unsafe for swimming or any human contact, according to United States Environmental Protection Agency (“USEPA”) guidelines.

“Centerville CARES felt that it had to get to the bottom of why Point Creek and Fisher Creek are so polluted,” said Andrew Hanson, staff attorney with Midwest Environmental Advocates, a nonprofit environmental law center representing Centerville CARES. “The evidence points directly to Maple Leaf Dairy as a significant source of that pollution.”

Maple Leaf Dairy, Inc. spreads animal waste on fields next to Point and Fisher Creeks and their tributaries. Many of those fields overlay underground pipes that carry runoff to the creeks. Centerville CARES’s sample results showed 41,000 *E.coli* bacteria per 100 milliliters (ml) in Fisher Creek immediately downstream of a field owned by Maple Leaf Dairy that drains through underground pipes to Fisher Creek. USEPA recommends that WDNR post a warning sign on swimming beaches when *E.coli* levels reach 235 colonies per 100 ml.

“Fisher and Point Creek are fouled with animal waste, largely because of Maple Leaf Dairy,” said Bill Verick, who grew up in Cleveland and is now a private attorney representing Centerville CARES. “My parents’ woods are immediately downstream of Maple Leaf Dairy. I have walked the streams in those woods and at times it has smelled like an open sewer,” Verick added.

“Land spreading millions of gallons of manure from thousands of animals requires accurate records and excellent management,” said Russ Tooley, President of Centerville CARES. “However, our research raises doubts about Maple Leaf Dairy’s manure management and accounting, and shows that Maple Leaf Dairy is overapplying animal waste on fields that drain to Point and Fisher Creeks, and ultimately, Lake Michigan.”

“We see the same fields being injected with liquid manure year after year. These fields are next to already contaminated streams. It seems there is just too much manure and not enough space.” said George Morgan, a member of Centerville CARES.

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Fast Facts

- 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.