



DNR Draft Livestock Waste Management Rules Show Progress

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MADISON, WI – Last week, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources issued a new draft of rules on livestock waste and runoff management. Citizens and environmental groups worked for many years to pressure the state Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to put public health first in enforcing laws on livestock waste management and the draft rules include many improvements that are a step in the right direction in protecting families' drinking water wells from contamination.

"The groundwater quality crisis from pollutants associated with agriculture demands significant change," said Midwest Environmental Advocates staff attorney Sarah Geers. "We hope that DNR's rule proposal will incrementally move us in the right direction, but more is needed. This rule applies to both large and small farmers, but we should be asking more of large, industrial concentrated animal feeding operations. We need them to do more in areas like Kewaunee County that are very vulnerable to groundwater pollution and that already have so many cows and too much manure."

Some of the most promising changes include:

- a prohibition on mechanical applications of manure on fields that have less than two feet of soil over bedrock or groundwater;
- a prohibition on mechanical applications of manure on frozen or snow-covered ground on fields with less than five feet of soil over bedrock;
- a requirement that manure applications leave a 250-foot setback from drinking water wells; and
- promotion of reduced application rates, applying manure at the right time, and pathogen treatment.

There are other aspects of the proposed rule that could be strengthened or clarified. MEA is disappointed that the DNR did not take this opportunity to develop targeted performance standards for other regions of the state that are also susceptible to groundwater contamination—such as southwest Wisconsin, and the central sands region. But this rule change proposal shows that DNR takes this issue seriously and recognizes the need for change.

Sharing the draft rules on runoff management and non-point source performance standards in Chapter NR 151 of the Wisconsin Administrative Code is the first step in a public review process of the proposed revisions. Midwest Environmental Advocates will weigh in with suggested improvements to further strengthen the rule. The DNR will accept comments on the draft Economic Impact Analysis through August 7, 2017. For more information, go to [DNR's webpage on the NR 151 rule changes](#).

Midwest Environmental Advocates is a public interest organization that uses the power of the law to support communities fighting for environmental accountability. Learn more about the Midwest Environmental Advocates on the web at midwestadvocates.org, like MEA on [Facebook](#) or follow @MidwestAdvocate on [Twitter](#).

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