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US EPA Demands Detailed On-Site Testing by Megadairy

Warren, IL - On July 1st, 2010, the US EPA sent a third request for information to AJ Bos and Traditions South Dairy. Citing Traditions South's need to comply with the Clean Water Act, the EPA has requested a sophisticated series of tests to "identify and characterize subsurface fractures or karst like features" at the site of the facility.

The US EPA is concerned that the megadairy proposed for Jo Daviess County could contaminate nearby wells, streams, or springs. To test if waste material from the site could contaminate drinking water, the US EPA has asked the megadairy owner to perform a dye tracing study.

Within 30 days of receipt, Traditions needs to supply US EPA, Region 5 with a:

- 1) "study plan and overall schedule for a preliminary geophysical investigation of the subsurface areas associated with the Traditions South Dairy's holding ponds." Geophysical investigations use modern test equipment to measure changes in gravity, conductivity of the soil, or other techniques to locate subsurface fractures.
- 2) "study plan and overall schedule describing a procedure to be used to identify gaining or losing streams within the Traditions South drainage basin and surrounding vicinity." A stream is termed gaining or losing if connections to groundwater sources, through fractures in the streambed, allow the stream to lose water into the ground, or during high water conditions, have groundwater come up into the stream.
- 3) "study plan and overall schedule describing the procedures...to be used to identify existing natural surface and subsurface voids within the Traditions South drainage basin and surrounding vicinity."

Once these plans have been reviewed and approved by EPA, Traditions contractors can perform these tests. Using the results from these studies, Traditions then has another 30 days to "provide a study plan and schedule for a quantitative groundwater tracer test to define groundwater flow trajectories, rates, and drainage basin boundaries."

Tracer tests use a fluorescent dye, injected into natural fractures or man-made wells, to trace the flow of groundwater. Sampling machines are then placed at locations most likely to receive groundwater from the facility, such as surrounding streams, springs, or wells. Samples are automatically taken at a predetermined interval and tested automatically or stored for later review. Using sensitive lab equipment that can detect even tiny quantities of dye in these samples, experts can plot the locations of the streams and wells that received dye from the megadairy.

These maps would then be used to determine the risk of contamination to people's wells, the

Apple River, or neighboring streaming from the more than 100,000,000 gallons of manure to be generated annually during the operation of this industrial agricultural facility.

A December 2009 ruling by Circuit Court Judge Ward lifted all restraints on the operation of the 5,500 head megadairy, yet the developer has not resumed any construction at the site.