

HOW DO YOU LIKE YOUR PORK?

ADEQ has granted a permit for a new hog farm near Big Creek, West of Mt. Judea, (Hwy. intersections 74/123). There are 17 separate hog waste application fields, 11 of these are adjacent to Big Creek, a tributary to the Buffalo National River. Total acreage = 630.7 acres.

An ADEQ spokesperson related that there is a buffer zone of approximately 100 feet between Big Creek and the hog waste application fields. The facility is known as “C and H Hog Farm”. Its treatment facility consists of in house shallow pits with a capacity of 759,542 gallons, a settling basin with capacity of 831,193 gallons and a holding pond with capacity of 1,904,730 gallons.

Hog farm details: Permitted – 2,503 swine weighing 55 lbs. or over

4,000 swine weighing less than 55 lbs.

Avg. weight = 150 lbs.

This amounts to 2,090,181 gallons of manure, litter and wastewater generated per year. This is approximately 5,727 gallons per day spread on fields (630.7 acres). On average, 9.1 gallons per day would be spread on each acre or 75 lbs. per day per acre.

The permit does not allow discharge of the waste but rather it must be applied to the owner’s fields. If an overflow occurs, the permittee must test the pond but has 30 days in which to report the overflow and likely run-off. All of the fields and facilities are above the 100 year flood level. The fields will be used for hay and pasture.

The permit states that “land application areas will receive application at rates consistent with infiltration capabilities of the native soil so that there is no runoff”. Soil analysis reports from the Soil Conservation Service of the University of Arkansas are attached to the permit, to show the type of soil. It is unknown whether or not the statement can be supported from the data presented.

PRIMARY CONCERNS:

1. Notification of the public is inadequate. Notice appeared on the ADEQ website. One must know how to wade through a great deal of information to look up permit applications. ADEQ issues about 30-40 permits per month. One plus - ADEQ’s Permit Section Director told me that in the future he would try to list permits by county. That would certainly be helpful.

2. In heavy rain events, pits and ponds may overflow into Dry Creek which flows into Big Creek, a tributary of the Buffalo National River. It is approximately 6 miles from the confluence of Big Creek and Dry Creek to the Buffalo. Hog waste applied on fields can run off into streams even with the precaution of buffer zones. An aquatic biologist has explained that when “*fine organics*” from decomposing hog waste (includes feces and urine) run off or slowly leach into soil and water, it becomes trapped in gravel bars where decomposition continues and produces ammonia and

methane - products that are toxic to mussels and fish. At risk are two mussel species and two fish being studied for classification as “endangered” near the confluence of Big Creek and the Buffalo River. It is possible that they also exist in Big Creek. Excessive nutrients in the water decrease clarity of the water, encourage growth of algae such as spirogyra, (the long green strands that we already see in the Buffalo during the summer) and lower dissolved oxygen.

3. This information is about prevention of problems. A few years down the road, the 630 acre farm may or may not be able to handle the quantity of hog waste, or the permittee may become less attentive to the rules and pollution becomes excessive as it did in NW Arkansas on the Illinois River.

4. As a conservation organization trying to protect and preserve the water quality of our streams and rivers, we have no desire for this farmer to lose the right to develop his land. The water quality of our rivers is at stake. To his credit, this farmer operated a successful hog farm near Jasper for 10 years with no citations or permit violations.

5. We believe a long term goal of ADEQ should be to deny permits for any animal or poultry factory farms in the watersheds of major rivers and streams, especially the Buffalo River, our first National River, and a designated Extraordinary Resource Water stream. All of our designated ERW streams deserve this extra protection! The state of Arkansas is empowered to protect the quality of water in our streams and rivers by the Clean Water Act. ADEQ follows national EPA guidelines established for Hog factory farms. They can set more restrictive permit rules than EPA but must follow minimum EPA guidelines.

6. The significant economic issue is that the Buffalo National River attracts more than a million visitors each year, contributing millions of dollars to the economy of Arkansas. There must be a balance between development of industry and protecting our state waters. Do our state agencies get that? Do you, the public, value our streams enough to protect them? You must decide and let ADEQ know of your objection or concerns. The conservation community has had a good working relationship with ADEQ and their fine scientific staff. We certainly want that relationship to continue however we believe that granting the permit for the location of this new hog farm is a serious error.

If you wish to contact ADEQ, Call or write a brief, courteous note:

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