

## Citizens shouldn't have to force DNR to enforce water laws

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Wisconsin has over 220 dairy concentrated animal feeding operations, CAFOs, and according to the Department of Natural Resources there are about 30 more applications pending. CAFOs are required to obtain a Wisconsin Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit every five years once they reach the level of 1,000 "animal units," or about 700 dairy cows.

Kewaunee County, near Green Bay, has 14 permitted CAFOs, giving it one of the highest livestock densities in the state.

In March 2012, Kinnard Farms, in Lincoln township in Kewaunee County, applied for a reissuance of its WPDES permit and proposed to construct new facilities that would allow it to more than double its herd size to 6,200 cattle. This number of cattle would produce over 70 million gallons of manure per year without, according to Kinnard Farms, any pollution of ground or surface water.

Impacts on the community such as noise, odor and dust damage to public highways do not need to be considered in the permitting process.

WPDES permits are supposed to protect the public. I would assume they are in keeping with the mission of the DNR to

protect and enhance our natural resources, including our air, land and water; wildlife, fish and forests and the ecosystems that sustain life.

But a permit is only as good as the legal enforcement. Kinnard Farms had a history of permit violations: three notices of non-compliance for land-spreading violations, as well as, a 2010 notice of violation for its overflowing manure lagoon. Still, the DNR issued the permit for Kinnard's expansion based on incomplete information as to how Kinnard Farms planned to clean up its act.

In October 2012 neighbors of Kinnard Farms filed a petition requesting the DNR to review the permit, challenging the DNR's issuance of a permit

before the expansion plans were completed, noting that there was no limit placed on the number of cows at the dairy and no provision stipulating monitoring wells. The permit could not ensure that storage facilities and land-spreading would not result in runoff events that would pollute surface and ground water.

Kimberlee Wright, spokeswoman for Midwest Environmental Advocates, noted that while the DNR has "some very good men and women who care about Wisconsin's water, they are very understaffed and they are under horrible political pressure to issue permits." She also noted that there was only one person in the state dealing with CAFO permits and no staff to monitor permitted facilities.

## GM-Uh-Oh? Annie's Inc. Sells Out to General Mills

By Patrick Woodall - Food and Water Watch

In Sept. General Mills announced that it will purchase the organic (and "natural") food company Annie's, Inc. This is just another in a long line of food company mergers, but it highlights how no matter what foods you love, corporate consolidation is taking over your grocery cart.

Over the past year we have followed a wave of food mergers that impact processed meat, distributors to restaurants, supermarkets, food processors and more. Many conscious consumers may be avoiding these processed foods, retailers or fast food joints, but merger-mania is a force that is sweeping every corner of the food system, including organics.

Organic food is big business, so the big food companies want to capture these profits. General Mills is the ninth biggest U.S. food processing company, manufacturing many foods throughout the supermarket including brands like Cheerio's, Pillsbury, Green Giant, Progresso and Yoplait. This merger adds Berkeley-based Annie's and its bunny-logo macaroni and cheese to General Mills' other organic or natural brands like Lara Bar, Food Should Taste Good, Cascadian Farms and Muir Glen. General Mills touted that the addition of Annie's brands would generate more than \$500 million in sales annually.



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The proposed General Mills-Annie's merger adds to the growing control of the organic sector by conventional and big agribusiness companies. Professor Phil Howard at Michigan State University has a startling map of industrial food's control over the organic food industry. Kellogg's owns Kashi, Dannon owns Stonyfield and Coca-Cola owns Honest Tea. Last year, the Dean Foods spinoff WhiteWave bought Earthbound Farms, the organic produce powerhouse.

This consolidation across the food landscape makes it impossible for consumers to shop their way out of the Foodopoly dominating our kitchens. But it also can have an insidious effect on public policy, including the

growing movement to require commonsense food labels.

Annie's has been one of the businesses championing consumers' right to know what is in their food by supporting state-based GMO labeling campaigns. General Mills has spent more than \$2 million opposing GMO labeling just in California and Washington state. With this deal, General Mills isn't just buying a new brand, it may be absorbing a political opponent. We can make a pretty good guess how this merger will affect consumers in the supermarket (reduced choices but higher prices), but we'll also have to see how it impacts Annie's independent support of GMO labeling.