

## Kara Smith

No other force is as impactful as that of public opinion. We see today that strong emotions lead to extreme division in nearly every aspect of our lives. The issue with C&H Hog Farm is no exception to this. It would seem there is no room for compromise or logical process. So many heart felt speeches and outcries have been made on behalf of the closure of this farm operation as well as by those advocating on behalf of the farm. After all have said their peace though, what has really been accomplished?

It is my belief that science and sound reasoning left this issue long ago. The group who has advocated for the closure of the farm has stated their mission is simply to close this farming operation and others like it. This leads me to believe that scientific data has not been of importance to them from the beginning. It would then seem that a personal vendetta has emerged, if in fact, no long term scientific study has been completed that identifies C&H operation as being detrimental to the environment. I challenge you to question, why then does this group believe to be justified in their cause?

For those unconcerned about this issue, I caution you in this way of thinking. If the ADEQ does not allow this permit, or the judicial system fails in pronouncing sound judgment in such cases, it will set a dangerous precedent for agriculture. This could in turn, be detrimental to existing and future farming operations in this state and potentially nationwide. When sound evidence and reason are no longer adhered to, then a decision such as denial of this permit has been handed down based on faulty process. The group who has decided to make C&H closure their mission will then look to another farm and another to achieve their goals. The idea that this is one isolated event is naive. Any farming operation could be found guilty in the highest court of public opinion from this moment on.

Why does this matter you say? In Arkansas for example, 97% of farming operations are family owned. Agriculture in Arkansas is a 16 billion dollar industry. Do not be confused with the thought that just because a farm has LLC or INC at the end of the title that is not composed of working fathers, sons, mothers, daughters, aunts, uncles, grandparents and family friends. If a company is organized as a corporation that is nothing to fear, only how they chose to be structured. I urge anyone reading to consider that this may only be one farm we are discussing, but think of all the others that could now be impacted. Think of all the food processing companies that take the rough products and turn them into grocery shelf ready consumer goods. Think of all the businesses that are complimentary to agriculture in our state and how many they employ. What impact could this have long term on us all?

I write this with the sincere hope that the agencies involved in this process feel the gravity and seriousness of the decisions they must make. I also propose that compromise is never too late. There may yet be a way to implement a manmade wetland on the farm, or some ecologically responsible waste management option that preserves the environment surrounding the farm. To all the federal, state, and local agencies involved-you are the brightest we have, work on a solution! Division, misinformation, and mistrust are the greatest enemies here. This issue will not just "go away". Food production will continue to be necessary, and so will the need for sustaining our natural resources. Instead of division, why not work together to promote meaningful change? We can all do better, and we must.

