

Suzanne Swanson

I am writing with deep concern for the potential establishment by Riverview LLP of the industrial-scale livestock facility near Morris, Minnesota. This project's scale requires that the MPCA give greater scrutiny than it ever has to previous proposals. This proposal by Riverview must be required to undergo a full environmental impact statement (EIS).

No feedlot has ever undergone an environmental impact statement (EIS) process in Minnesota. Each time the MPCA has determined that an operation should undergo one, the operator that requested the permit has withdrawn their application. And all of those operations that were determined to need an EIS were significantly smaller than Riverview's current proposed operation will be.

If built, the Riverview operation would be allowed to pump up to 226 million gallons of water per year from an off-site well. For reference, the City of Morris, which is home to over 5,000 people, is permitted to pump up to 300 million gallons of water a year. Once constructed, the facility would produce 202,744,000 gallons of liquid manure and wastewater a year and 26,400 tons of solid manure a year.

The Pomme de Terre watershed, where this expansion is proposed, is already considered a sensitive watershed. The MPCA already lists the two closest waterways to the facility, the Pomme de Terre River and an unnamed creek, as impaired, and this proposal would only exacerbate the impairment.

I no longer live in Western Minnesota, but I grew up in that part of the state. The small town where I grew up is struggling as small farmers try to deal with the challenges of corporate ag. Minnesota is already losing dozens of dairy farms annually due to inconsistent and often below cost-of-production milk prices. Massive dairy operations, like the one Riverview is proposing to build, have glutted the market and tightened Big Milk's stranglehold on the industry, allowing them to push small and medium-sized family farms out of business and off the land. This operation would only exacerbate the situation and accelerate the loss of dairy farms in our state, decimating Main Street economies in the process.

The MPCA is charged with assessing the environmental impact of proposed projects, protecting the safety of Minnesota residents. Again, this proposal by Riverview must be required to undergo a full environmental impact statement (EIS).