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Media Contact

James Peters, Esq.

320-634-3778

jim@peterslawfirm.us

Unprecedented alliance of leading environmental, public health and animal protection groups weigh in on family farmer's appeal:

Case of wrongful siting of industrial-scale swine operation by county considered of national importance

ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA - OCTOBER 15, 2016 - In an unprecedented action, a coalition of the nation's leading environmental, public health and animal protection groups have joined a lifelong family farmer's legal efforts to address the negative impacts associated with factory farms. The Appellants in the case, Lowell and Evelyn Trom, initiated the legal action to protect their land, home, health, livelihoods and the future of their family on a generational family farm where Mr. Trom was born 87 years ago.

This week, professionals affiliated with Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future (an interdisciplinary academic center based within the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health), the Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy, Environment Minnesota, Food & Water Watch, The Humane Society of the United States and Animal Legal Defense Fund filed amicus (or "friend of the court") briefs with the Minnesota Court of Appeals.

The amici volunteered their time to help inform the court about the multiple dangers posed by industrial-scale corporate factory animal-production operations like the facility at issue in this case. The County's approval of the Masching facility paves the way for the 11th industrial-scale factory livestock operation to locate within a 3-mile radius of the Troms' family farm.

According to faculty and researchers affiliated with Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future, there are substantial public health impacts from air emissions, including hydrogen sulfide, ammonia, particulate matter, endotoxins and methane. Additionally, disease-causing bacteria, viruses and other pathogens can be found in animal manure and can be transferred to people through fecal-oral transmission and exposure to contaminated air, drinking water and recreational water.

"In approving this factory farm, Dodge County has glossed over its own requirements that it considers known threats to the environment and public health," said Kevin Lee, Staff Attorney with Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy. "This facility alone will produce more fecal waste than the entire human population of Dodge, and there are hundreds of others in the county. Much of the waste will ultimately run off into the Mississippi River and to the Gulf of Mexico. Unless Dodge officials abide by their own rules, the situation only promises to worsen."

"Massive amounts of manure from industrial-scale hog operations are a persistent threat to Minnesota's rivers and streams," said John Rumpler, clean water program director for Environment Minnesota. "If local officials choose to take on the responsibility of issuing permits for operations like Masching's, then they must be held accountable to protect our water."

"Factory farms' misuse of antibiotics stems from their disregard of animals' basic needs, disregard for the health and safety of workers and disregard for the communities they operate in," said Michael Greger, M.D., director of public health and animal agriculture at The Humane Society of the United States. "This practice of continuous, herd-wide drugging has created a threat so significant that the United Nations General Assembly, acting for the fourth time ever on a public health issue, recently called antibiotic resistance a 'most urgent global risk.'"

"Factory farms are filthy, germ-ridden places, so it's not surprising that the meat industry has overused antibiotics to the point of rendering them useless against some of the most pressing public health crises of our time," said Stephen Wells, Animal Legal Defense Fund Executive Director. "It's time for consumers to reject this model, which not only disregards animal suffering, but also profoundly endangers public health."

Copies of the amicus briefs are posted online at the website for Dodge County Concerned Citizens at: www.dodgecc.org.

Descriptions of the individuals and groups:

The Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future ("CLF"), with its global expertise, works with students, educators, researchers, policymakers, advocacy organizations and communities to build a healthier, more equitable and resilient food system. CLF's work is driven by the concept that public health, diet, food production and the environment are deeply interrelated and that understanding these relationships is crucial in pursuing a livable future. This is the largest school of public health in the world. Ranked #1 by U.S. News and World Report since 1994. Factory farming (or industrial food animal production) is an area of high-priority. www.jhsph.edu

Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy ("MCEA") uses law, science and research to protect Minnesota's environment, its natural resources and the health of its people. MCEA is the leading legal voice protecting Minnesota's environment, with deep organizational expertise that includes some of the foremost environmental law and policy professionals in the state. www.mncenter.org

Environment Minnesota is a citizen-supported environmental organization dedicated to protecting our clean water, clean air and open spaces. Environment Minnesota has spearheaded efforts to protect thousands of streams and other waterways in our state. www.environmentminnesota.org

Food and Water Watch champions healthy food and clean water for all. They stand up to corporations that put profits before people, and advocate for a democracy that improves people's lives and protects our environment. www.foodandwaterwatch.org

The Humane Society of the United States ("HSUS") is the nation's largest animal protection organization, rated most effective by its peers. For 60 years, HSUS has celebrated the protection of all animals and confronted all forms of cruelty. HSUS is the nation's largest provider of hand-on services for animals, caring for more than 100,000 animals each year, and preventing cruelty to millions more through advocacy campaigns. www.hurnanesociety.org

The Animal Legal Defense Fund was founded in 1979 to protect the lives and advance the interests of animals through the legal system. To accomplish this mission, the Animal Legal Defense Fund files high-impact lawsuits to protect animals from harm; provides free legal assistance and training to prosecutors to assure that animal abusers are punished for their crimes; supports tough animal protection legislation and fights harmful legislation; and provides resources and opportunities to law students and professionals to advance the emerging field of animal law. www.aldf.org