

Published at occwa.org 1/15/22

CAFOs need oversight

OCCWA urges passing a county ordinance on CAFOs

By Eric Rempala

Jan. 15, 2022--Oneida County held a public hearing on Jan. 5 to address a proposed Manure Storage Ordinance. View the meeting here: [Manure Storage - Oneida County Land and Water Conservation \(ooclw.org\)](http://www.ooclw.org) Currently, while Oneida County has a moratorium on CAFOs (concentrated animal feeding operations), it is one of only 10 Wisconsin counties that does not have a Manure Storage Ordinance. The proposed ordinance would go a long way in providing local protection to these particular animal operations.

We have seen multiple counties with weak local protections deal with the impacts of CAFOs. We applaud Oneida County for their foresight on this issue. Problems that can occur with CAFO operations are, but not limited to, the following:

- Ground and surface water quality changes.
- Impacts of quantity and quality of nearby water wells.
- Changes in air quality.
- Increased odor and noise complaints.
- Damage to local roads from increased truck traffic.
- Phosphate and nitrate overloading.

Monitoring these issues and permitting CAFOs currently falls to the DNR. The DNR is greatly understaffed and underfunded when it comes to this issue. A local ordinance would provide Oneida County with a tool for oversight when necessary. More information on what CAFO oversight means and who pays for it [can be found here](#).

Below is a public comment from Jan. 5 meeting made by Dan Butkus, an Oneida County property owner and water advocate. We feel Dan's comments represent an even-handed approach to protecting Oneida County's water resources, providing another set of eyes on animal operations that can help prevent degradation of our valuable waters.

Public Hearing statement by Dan Butkus

I appreciate the opportunity to make a public comment in support of the proposed Manure Storage Ordinance.

It was hard work to create the ordinance, but I believe it was well worth it. The sole goal was to produce a good ordinance and try to accommodate the concerns of all parties, because that's what ordinances are for: managing disparate interests over shared use of a resource in the most

equitable way possible.

Does everyone get everything they want? No. Compromise is not a dirty word. Those involved tried to find middle ground between farms of all types and residents/visitors who live on or use Oneida County waters for recreation. Both groups contribute to the tax base in this county. Both impact the surface waters of the county through their separate use, in their own way. One does not get to exist at the expense of another.

I believe the draft ordinance represents good work by a group of people who understand the balance of the interested parties. There was give and take all the way around. Additional input was seriously considered. I believe this proposed ordinance is better than many in agriculture-rich counties.

I've heard it said that we don't need an ordinance, there are no CAFOs in Oneida County. I've heard that this will hurt small farms. I've heard that most small farms already comply with good practices and it's unnecessary. To those comments, my replies are these. Implementing an ordinance after a CAFO is established is too late. This is a preventative measure. I've not seen solid data from the small farms showing how this ordinance will hurt them financially, or how it will negatively impact their day to day operations.

And to the last point, consider this. It is not the farms that follow good practices that worry me. It's the one or two that don't. If what they say is true and most are already following good practices, then this ordinance does not affect most small farms. In most cases, small operations won't be required to obtain a permit. All that is being asked of small farms is that they all use the same guidelines of good practices by keeping manure stacks away from areas that endanger surface and ground water and minimize runoff by standardizing setbacks. If these are the good practices that they claim they are already following, then where is the issue with the ordinance, really?

Lastly, I'd like us to consider that of the 72 counties in Wisconsin, 62 have a Manure Storage Ordinance. Of the 10 that do not, six are in North Central Wisconsin, the area which is most rich with inland lakes in our state: Price, Iron, Vilas, Forest, Florence, and of course Oneida. I think that if counties with more agriculture than Oneida County found it wise to pass a Manure Storage Ordinance, and managed to overcome threading the needle of shared use to accommodate all parties, including small farms, then Oneida County can as well. We only need to follow their lead. I support the manure storage ordinance. Thank you.

The current ordinance proposal is just that: a proposal and yet to be presented to the Oneida County Board for a vote. We at OCCWA recommend residents to monitor this issue and give comment when the public listening session on this ordinance is held. Also, we urge you to give input to your district county supervisor, who will be voting on this issue. You can find your supervisor [here](#).

###