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Report Documents Waste Lagoons' Threats to Environment, Public Health
Environmental Groups Call for Ban on New Factory Farm Waste Lagoons

WASHINGTON (July 24, 2001) ? Every year factory farms dump 220 billion gallons of animal waste onto farmland, much of which ends up polluting our waterways, posing a major threat to the environment and public health, according to a report released today by NRDC (Natural Resources Defense Council) and the Clean Water Network. The report, the most comprehensive one to date on waste lagoons, calls on the Bush administration to phase out waste lagoons at large-scale hog, dairy and egg farms, and ban the construction of new ones.

"The Bush administration should force factory farms to close their waste lagoons and install up-to-date pollution controls," said Melanie Shepherdson Flynn, an attorney with NRDC's Clean Water Project. "The administration needs to show it is more interested in protecting public health than protecting the profits of corporate agribusiness."

Citing scientific studies and documentation of air and water pollution, the report "Cesspools of Shame," documents the dangers posed by factory farm lagoons, which store massive quantities of animal waste in open-air lagoons. Lagoon wastewater contains viruses, bacteria, antibiotics, metals, oxygen-depleting substances and other toxins that run off the land, contaminate the groundwater, and pollute the atmosphere. The report also summarizes the wide range of alternatives to lagoons, including wastewater treatment technology and sustainable agricultural practices that prevent pollution.

"This report includes several studies conducted in Iowa, and highlights why we have called for a phase out of open-air manure lagoons," says Mark Lambert, Executive Director of the Iowa Environmental Council. "Everyone who drinks water, enjoys swimming and fishing, or desires clean air to breathe has a stake in this."

Despite the devastating impact of this outdated approach to manure storage and disposal, the Environmental Protection Agency is not considering banning lagoons and sprayfields in the proposed CAFO regulations, which are currently under review. Unless the rules are strengthened, thousands of hog, dairy, and egg factory farms will continue to store manure in open-air lagoons, some the size of several football fields.

The report, "Cesspools of Shame" is available on the NRDC web site at <http://www.nrdc.org>.