

MICHIGAN TROUT UNLIMITED CAFO POSITION PAPER

Michigan Trout Unlimited seeks to conserve, protect and restore coldwater fish and their watersheds. Michigan is famous for its coldwater rivers which flow through vast forested areas, but a significant number of coldwater streams also flow through Michigan's agricultural lands. Michigan Trout Unlimited recognizes that agriculture is vital to the economic and social fabric of our state, but is concerned that certain agricultural practices can pose a serious threat to nearby coldwater streams.

The need to produce food as economically as possible, has given rise to an increase in the number of concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) within Michigan. CAFOs are facilities where large numbers of poultry, swine, cattle or other animals are confined within a much smaller area than traditional pasture farms. The concentration of animals results in large quantities of wastes which can create significant impacts to air, water, and land quality, and the public health, if not properly managed. Manure and wastewater collected from these facilities contain pollutants such as ammonia, phosphorus, organic matter, sediments, pathogens, heavy metals, and hormones. These pollutants can make their way into surface and ground waters through runoff, spills or lagoon leakage, and soil infiltration. Once in the water, these wastes can impair water quality in a number of ways, resulting in unsafe pathogen levels, elevated ammonia and depleted dissolved oxygen concentrations which can become detrimental or even lethal to aquatic species, toxic algal blooms, and excessive plant growth which inhibits stream flow or limits recreational uses on lakes. Sediments can fill holes and cover spawning and insect habitat, and heavy metals and hormones can have detrimental health effects on fish and other aquatic species. In addition, these pollutants degrade water resources, and can expose people to wastes and pathogens in their drinking water.

Caring for our coldwater resources requires cooperation with a large community of users. Michigan Trout Unlimited seeks to cooperate with CAFO operators and the rest of the agricultural community to find and implement ways to eliminate threats to individual coldwater streams. Michigan Trout Unlimited approaches issues related to coldwater resource management from a strong scientific basis. In this manner and through its local chapters, Michigan Trout Unlimited will assist CAFOs and other farm owners in the monitoring of stream quality and data analysis to help identify sources of pollution or areas that have the potential to add detrimental nutrients or sediments to rivers or streams. From there, Michigan Trout Unlimited will work with CAFOs and farm owners to develop reasonable work plans that minimize ongoing threats and prevent future threats. Michigan Trout Unlimited will encourage and support chapter involvement for stream and habitat improvement that can readily be put to use on agricultural and stream improvement projects.

Michigan Trout Unlimited's goal is to work alongside the agricultural community to develop long-term solutions to these potential threats which will ensure the viability of both our coldwater resources as well as the surrounding agricultural community. But most importantly, Michigan Trout Unlimited will stand steadfast in our mission to protect Michigan's coldwater watersheds. Michigan Trout Unlimited views agricultural practices that result in fish-kills or impairment to trout and salmon populations and habitats in coldwater watersheds as completely unacceptable. In such cases, Michigan Trout Unlimited will consider all legal options.

For more information regarding animal feeding operations and CAFOs, visit:

<http://www.epa.gov/oecaagct/anafoidx.html#About%20Animal%20Feeding%20Operations>

http://www.michigan.gov/deq/0,1607,7-135-3313_3682_3713-96774--,00.html