

hundreds of factory farms will be exempt from needing permits that limit water pollution thanks to a new Bush Administration rule signed today. In addition, the Environmental Protection Agency did not adopt improved controls for bacteria and other pathogens that can pose risks to human health and wildlife.

Factory farms, also known as concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs), confine animals on an industrial scale and produce massive amounts of manure and other waste that can pollute waterways with dangerous contaminants. EPA estimates that these facilities generate three times more waste than people do nationwide. Moreover, factory farms lack waste treatment facilities comparable to those that treat human sewage.

The new rule:

- Creates a loophole allowing facility operators to avoid permits by claiming they won't have a discharge.
- Adopts a scheme that allows facilities to avoid certain environmental enforcement. For instance, if an operator certifies that the facility won't have a discharge, environmental authorities will ignore enforcement action, even if the facility discharges to the nation's waters.
- Rejects improvements in technology that would reduce harmful bacteria and other pathogens contained in animal waste, missing an opportunity to prevent water pollution and threats to public health.

"Literally and figuratively, this rule puts the Bush Administration's stamp of approval on a load of manure," said Jon Devine, Senior Attorney in the Water Program at the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC). "Even though Congress specifically targeted factory farms for regulation under the Clean Water Act in 1972 and EPA has recognized the importance of these operations getting pollution control permits, the Administration stepped in it today."

"It's outrageous to see the environmental yard sale that marks the Bush Administration's final days in office," said Jeffrey Odefey, Staff Attorney at the Waterkeeper Alliance. "Clearly, industry lobbyists are picking up last-minute deals intended to preserve their right to pollute for years to come. Instead of offering meaningful protection of our nation's waters and communities, EPA has come up with an unworkable muddle that sets the country back by decades."

"Clean water is too important to allow polluting factory farms to continue business as usual," said Ed Hopkins, Sierra Club's Environmental Quality Program director. "Yet again, the Bush Administration has put private industry profits before public health."

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