



Texas Association of Dairymen

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TAD URGES STATE ENVIRONMENTAL AGENCY TO ISSUE BOSQUE PERMITS

Process dragging on, preventing implementation of environmental safeguards

POTTSVILLE – The Texas Association of Dairymen (TAD) and its members on Monday spoke at a public hearing in Pottsville to urge the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) to issue an operating permit for the Okee Dairy, located in Hamilton County, and to expedite the issuance of other dairy permits in the watershed.

The issuance of the permits will allow the dairies to proceed with facility improvements to better protect water quality, including construction of larger retention lagoons and the addition of land for application of nutrients.

“The Okee Dairy and others have done everything required by the permitting process,” said John Cowan, TAD executive director. “Every ‘t’ is crossed, every ‘i’ is dotted, the application is thorough and complete. The Okee Dairy and others that have applied for permits under the new Confined Animal Feeding Operation Rules administered by the TCEQ have agreed to operate under stronger rules that balance environmental protections with economic interests. Yet the process drags on – unnecessarily, the Texas Association of Dairymen believes, over what amounts to a long-running dispute between the City of Waco and the TCEQ.”

Under the CAFO rules adopted in July 2004, producers in the Bosque watershed must meet more stringent permit requirements than dairymen in other parts of Texas. Yet – three years later and 15 months after the settlement of the lawsuit between the City of Waco and several Central Texas dairies – no permits have been issued by the TCEQ for applicants operating in the Bosque watershed.

The TCEQ and the Environmental Protection Agency signed draft approvals of the applications by the Okee Dairy and Hidden View Dairy in Erath County. But final approvals were postponed after the City of Waco challenged the Okee Dairy’s application and asked for a public meeting, which was held Monday in Pottsville.

The Sierra Club has requested a contested case hearing for the permit application submitted by Hidden View Dairy.

“The City of Waco and the Sierra Club claim they are concerned about the dairies’ environmental impact,” Cowan said. “Yet, ironically, their continued challenges on every front have actually delayed the formal effectiveness of stricter, more rigorous environmental rules. This makes no sense.”

“It’s time for all parties to work together to get these permits issued so that dairies can operate their businesses with certainty and so that Central Texans will know that environmental protections are in place,” he added.

The Texas Association of Dairymen (www.milk4texas.org) is a non-profit corporation comprised of dairy cooperatives whose members are individual milk producers in Texas.