

Minnesota's Generic Environmental Impact Statement on Animal Agriculture

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Laws of Minnesota 1998 directed the Minnesota Environmental Quality Board (EQB) to conduct a Generic Environmental Impact Statement (GEIS) on animal agriculture. The purpose of the GEIS is to provide State and local policy makers with: objective, balanced information regarding the economic, environmental, health and social concerns related to animal agriculture; and develop recommendations regarding future options for animal agriculture in the State. The GEIS will involve three broad phases over approximately 2 ½ - 3 years: scoping, study and analysis, and finalizing the GEIS. A 25 member Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) representing all interests has been established by the EQB to provide advice on the scope and content of the GEIS.

The GEIS Scoping Document -- a study outline that is based on extensive public input -- was adopted by the EQB in December 1998. The Scoping Document includes an explanation of the 12 economic, environmental, social, and health topics to be addressed in the GEIS.

The EQB recently initiated the second phase of the GEIS aimed at study and analysis of the 12 identified topics. The first step of this phase is an in-depth summary of existing research on these 12 study topics. The "literature summary" will be conducted under the direction of the EQB through a contract(s) with outside experts during April through August 1999. The EQB, working with the CAC, will use the results of the literature summary to address the questions outlined in the GEIS Scoping Document and to determine the need for additional, new research that might be needed on the identified topics. Additional research is expected to be conducted during 2000.

The EQB also will gather information on location, size, species, and number of feedlots in the state. This GEIS "inventory" work will be conducted under EQB direction with outside experts during 1999. Existing data sources will provide the basis for this inventory. The statewide information on feedlot location, size, species, and number will enable the EQB to look at feedlot location and concentration relative to other variables of interest to the GEIS, such as population, population density, land use, water resources, ground-water sensitivity, and land base.

The GEIS process and status will be shared with interested conference participants as an example of one State's effort to address the feedlot controversy.

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