

BUFFALO RIVER WATERSHED ALLIANCE

PO Box 101, Jasper, AR 72641
(870) 446-5783 buffalowatershed@gmail.com

May 2, 2016

Dear Editor,

The Arkansas Pollution Control and Ecology Commission met last Friday and some alarming information came to light regarding the possible leakage of hog waste, for over a year, from beneath the C&H Hog Farm facility.

In March 2015, a study was done by Oklahoma State University in collaboration with the Big Creek Research and Extension Team (BCRET), the team which is reportedly monitoring the C&H operation for potential negative impacts. This study, called Electrical Resistivity Imaging (ERI), produced images, of over 100 feet in depth, of geological structures beneath the facility such as possible fractures, flow paths, porous rock, etc.

Last October members of the BCRET, in an email discussing the ERI data from seven months earlier mentioned a possible “major fracture and movement of waste” beneath the ponds.

Two weeks ago, the Buffalo River Watershed Alliance received the raw data produced by this study over a year ago but because no interpretation of any kind was provided (other than the statement in October) we requested independent opinions from two experts in the field. Dr Chris Liner, a geophysicist at the U of A, concluded that “*pond data implies ground water contamination to a depth of at least 120 ft, most logically from leakage of the hog manure storage ponds.*” Mr Tom Aley, a registered geologist, stated, “*The data strongly suggest that there is appreciable leakage downward out of the manure ponds. Such leakage not only introduces pollutants into the groundwater system but in this karst setting may also lead to subsidence or collapse of the ponds*”

While it is certainly alarming to learn that swine waste may have been leaking into the groundwater for over a year, and that continued leakage could lead to pond collapse, it is also disturbing that neither ADEQ nor the Commission knew anything about this potentially catastrophic discharge of waste until this meeting when they heard it from the public. Why was ADEQ not informed when BCRET first became aware of this matter? Former Congressman Ed Bethune, who also spoke at this meeting, said he wanted to know “Who knew what and when?” We also would like to know who is watching the Hog House.

We ask ADEQ to halt C&H operations until this ERI data can be confirmed through drilling of sampling wells, a typical follow-up practice in such studies. If the ponds are in fact leaking, ADEQ must ensure that immediate action is taken to clean up the contamination and then close the facility permanently to prevent future catastrophic damage.

ADEQ should never have approved a swine CAFO in this location in the first place. Now is the time to correct that mistake.

Gordon Watkins
President, Buffalo River Watershed Alliance