**In Wisconsin**

**Point Pollution Tape**

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>> Rose and Wallace Andre aren't strangers to rural Wisconsin. They've lived on the border between door and Kewaunee counties for seventy years. But this year they're dealing with something new. Contaminated well water.

>> It was very discolored and stinky. It smelled just like manure. It looked like dark beer I said.

>> The Andres suspect, but cannot prove, their well has been contaminated by manure spread on the field next door in late winter.

>> We never spread manure in the winter because it was too tough doing it. Freezing up. In spring we hauled it out on the cornfield.

>> And the manure Wallace Andre saw being spread the day before his well went bad was in liquid form.

>> Soil is a tremendous thing. It can attenuate a lot of pollutants in manure. However when you have liquid manure it tends to flow through the soil profiles faster.

>> County conservationist Andy Wallander says late winter weather has made applying manure safely difficult.

>> You have freezing and thawing. Cracks forming in the soil surface. It's not the best time to be spreading manure.

>> The field the Andres point to is on one of three farms operated by John Pagel. Pagel calls the well problems tragic but says the contamination could have come from any one of a number of farms or even from Andre’s own livestock. Pagel says the manure was spread according to a plan that's part of the state permit required to operate a farm with over a thousand cows.

>> We use a rule of thumb. We use an acre per cow.

>> The DNR's rules require farms to demonstrate they can safely store and handle manure and have access to enough appropriate land to safely disperse the animal waste. Even if they follow the rules, Pagel says large farms are a tempting target.

>> I think that comes from the large farms not being in our area for very long. That it throws up a red flag or creates an image that we need to somehow satisfy the people that that's not true. The large farms are doing a good job or do have the management capabilities of doing a good job.

>> What makes you think it’s the manure over there rather than something closer?

>> Because we never had trouble. We never had trouble with ours. No. It was always there. We always had cows before when we were milking. And our kids never got sick.

>> Twenty miles away in Luxemburg, Scott and Judy Treml and their children did get sick. The Tremls now get water from a huge tank truck parked in the driveway. Another home just up the road needed a new well. The Tremls are waiting to figure out what's wrong before they dig a new well.

>> It was Sunday, February 29th. Our neighbors came to us with a jar of her water that was horrible. It was green. It smelled like manure. And she came over wondering if we had the problem. And then that afternoon the same thing happened to our water.

>> Less than a month before, tests showed the Treml's well to be free of bacteria. But on February 24th, Scott Treml saw a farmer spreading liquid manure on land across the road. He shot this home video showing the resulting runoff flowing into School Creek. The creek flows next to the other home with a contaminated well. It then runs behind the Treml's home. Treml then filed a complaint with the DNR.

>> The farm field across from the Treml home is rented by Glenn Stahl who operates this farm about a mile from the Tremls. A DNR case history obtained by Wisconsin Public Television shows that two days before Scott Treml filed his complaint, department officials contacted Stahl about another manure runoff problem. It also involved runoff into School Creek. DNR runoff management specialist Dave Bougie inspected the field Treml complained about and said everything was done according to the farm's permit.

>> I did not see an application in an area where it was not allowed. Or where it was an excessive application.

>> The water sample the Tremls took from their well February 29th tested unsafe. A test by the DNR March 5th also said the Treml's well was grossly contaminated. That was one day after the Tremls started getting sick.

>> The baby got sick on Thursday, which would have been the 4th. It started on Thursday night. I had her in to the doctor on Friday. We were in the doctor the afternoon. I'm getting a stool culture from her. I got sick starting Friday night. Through the weekend the baby and I were in the hospital. On Saturday night into Sunday morning. Kaitlin our 8 year old got sick Saturday night. Emily got sick on Sunday night. And then Scott got sick 2 days after that.

>> The tests could not positively link the Treml's illness to the contaminated water. These manure runoff complaints involving Glenn Stahl's farm are not the first. The DNR case summary shows a similar series of complaints involving manure handling going back to 1982. It shows other discharges to School Creek in January, April, and June of 2003. In July 2003, the DNR issued Stahl a permit allowing him to expand his herd.

>> How did somebody like this get a permit?

>> I cannot answer that on the air. Because this is the strategy which we are utilizing to deal with the situation.

>> Wow.

>> How could -- if this went from 1982 and it's 2004, how could it continue for that long?

>> And then they keep issuing him permits to get even larger when he's not in compliance.

>> That's the part that's just troubling.

>> When a farm isn't in compliance, how they could issue him a permit to get larger?

>> Glenn Stahl did not return phone calls or respond to a written request for comment prior to this broadcast.

>> County conservationist Andy Wallander says the past problems may not have played a part in approval of the expansion permit.

>> Right now I don't know if they have the mechanisms to deny somebody a permit that has fulfilled all the requirements of the application.

>> The DNR has argued that a large farm at least has to have a plan to deal with manure. Small farms, even ones that have problems, don't have to have any plan. County conservationist Andy Wallander says the problem doesn't just involve who gets a permit. The problem often is the result of allowing liquid manure to be spread in the winter when the ground is frozen.

>> We need to key in on the areas where we let farmers spread manure in the winter. I think that will go a long way towards solving all our groundwater problems.

>> Under the current state rules, winter land spreading of any kind of manure is allowed provided they follow the conditions of their permit.

>> But the DNR’s Dave Bougie says the rules are being rewritten.

>> And one of the things that is under discussion is the spreading of liquid manure in the winter time. And on the books and in discussion is the potential banning of liquid spreading in the winter time except in the case of an emergency.

>> That rule change would likely draw objections from farmers.

>> It would be a problem. It really would. We would have to put up some type of additional storage of the manure that we need to disperse which is about ten days to two weeks out of the winter.

>> Both families we spoke to who have contaminated wells expressed frustration about manure spreading in the winter time.

>> The county shows that that field on the county map is a manure hazard zone. It's very clear. Almost the entire field in the county's eyes should not have manure spread on it...in the winter.

>> But the county's maps only amount to recommendations. The DNR uses different standards intended to be applicable statewide. Wallander says they don't take into account conditions unique to one county.

>> We need to get state standards that take into account the local geologic formations that are found throughout the state. Right now I don't believe they address those well enough.