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Press Statement on Reversal of Maryland Chicken House Permit

Judge's decision is the first of its kind to deny CAFO permit due to environmental concerns

(Worcester County, Md.) – Yesterday, an Administrative Law Judge decided in favor of a challenge brought by Environmental Action Center (EAC) and Assateague Coastal Trust (ACT), reversing a permit approval for a proposed concentrated animal feeding operation (CAFO) on the Eastern Shore because of inadequate environmental protection. Advocates say the decision represents the first victory by the environmental community in challenging a flawed CAFO permit. In response, the organizations have issued the following joint press statement:

The Maryland Department of Environment (MDE) had approved this proposed CAFO for coverage under the General Discharge Permit while exempting necessary manure and mortality storage structures for the first two years of operation. These structures are critical to prevent pollutants from entering our waterways.

MDE has never denied a permit under their CAFO program, and this is the first time a judge has stepped in on behalf of the environment. We are thrilled with this decision. It represents a big win for the local community in Worcester County, their public health and the environment.

This is a victory for the regulatory process as an end to rubber-stamping CAFO applications. Instead, this decision directs MDE to fulfill its duty to the public and enforce the requirements of the Clean Water Act. We hope this decision also discourages future applicants from proposing a CAFO without ensuring all requirements are met to protect public health, our local waterways and the Chesapeake Bay from harmful runoff.

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