

June 27, 2018



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: [Sarah Edwards](#)
Environmental Action Center
(843) 469-1898

**PRESS STATEMENT ON REVOCATION OF APPROVAL FOR
MARYLAND POULTRY CAFO**

MDE withdraws approval for CAFO permit after community challenges permit coverage

(Cecil County, Md.) – Maryland Department of Environment (“MDE”) revoked final approval for a proposed concentrated animal feeding operation (“CAFO”) in Cecil County because it lacked the required environmental protections. MDE’s decision to revoke the final approval and require greater stringency in the CAFO plan signals that new facilities must meet requirements to protect human health and the environment. This decision came after EAC staff attorney, Sarah Edwards and co-counsel David Beste of Downs, Beste & Blackson, LLC appealed MDE’s approval on behalf of Calvert Neighborhood Alliance. This is another step in ending a rubber stamp approval process following a recent ALJ decision that found MDE had approved a CAFO in Worcester County for permit coverage that was legally insufficient in the face of environmental requirements.

The proposed Cecil County CAFO applied for a water-discharge permit as an organic operation, which suggested it would be a sustainable operation with improved conditions for the birds and for the environment. However, the opposite was true. Instead, major integrators (such as Perdue and Tyson) use the identical site design plan and stormwater systems as non-organic industrial CAFOs. The only difference is the poultry feed and doors that open to a small fenced area for a minimum time period. Calvert Neighborhood Alliance was concerned that MDE approved the operation without considering the significant amount of nutrients that would be deposited in the outdoor access areas, as well as enormous amounts of ammonia and other air pollution emitted from the proposed facility. This was particularly troublesome because the approved plan failed to identify the nearby waterway that is susceptible to nutrient loaded wastewater from the CAFO.

This is also a victory for small and independent farmers that actually meet the public’s expectation of organic farms that are sustainable and more suitable for bird habitation. It is unfair to these independent farmers for factory style operations, contracting with major poultry corporations like Perdue, to run industrial-sized CAFOs under the guise of an organic label. The independent farmers that prioritize the environment and animal welfare cannot keep up with the market when Perdue invades the organic market with industrial-sized operations.

This operation had particular environmental hazards because it combined industrial capacity with outdoor access. An operation of this size must cautiously address the environmental concerns inherent when 906,000 birds per year are given outdoor access in small fenced-in areas next to a waterway. Thanks to the efforts of the concerned community, and the attorneys at EAC and Downs, Beste & Blackson, LLC, these issues were addressed. MDE has now responded appropriately by revoking approval and requiring greater environmental protections.