



Sustainability Threat: Animal Factories in Michigan



The Adrian Dominican Sisters endorse The Earth Charter, which upholds four principles: *Respect Earth and life in all its diversity; care for the community of life with understanding, compassion and love; build democratic societies that are just, participatory, sustainable and peaceful; and secure Earth's bounty and beauty for present and future generations.* Pathways to living the princi-

ples include (5.a) *adopt at all levels sustainable development plans and regulations that make environmental and rehabilitation integral to all development initiatives, and (5 e.) manage the use of renewable resources such as water, soil, forest products and marine life in ways that do not exceed rates of regeneration and that protect the health of ecosystems.*

On the Motherhouse campus there is a growing focus on sustainability, both in study and practice. The Adrian Dominican Sisters' Campus Ecological Sustainability Policy was adopted in September 2005, and department managers have completed the Northwest Earth Institute study on *Choices for Sustainable Living*. There is a deepening awareness that "local is global" and the "all are connected" (for more information, visit www.globalcommunity.org/flash/wombat.shtml). But in our neighborhood there is a growing environmental and social crisis from industrial animal agriculture. In Michigan, 12 of the 200 Confined Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) — "factory farms" of 700 or

more cattle or hogs — are located in Lenawee and Hillsdale counties. *Living a Nightmare: Animal Factories in Michigan*, a new Sierra Club video available through the Portfolio Advisory Board office, documents the effect these CAFOs have on water and air quality.

From 2000 to 2006, there were 140 confirmed violations of Michigan's Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act in the Bean/Tiffin Watershed and River Raisin Watershed. The release of liquefied manure directly into drainage systems has resulted in Medina Drain and Durfee Creek

being designated as "impaired" by the Department of Environmental Quality. North of Adrian, discharges from a CAFO flowed into Wolf Creek, which flows into the Adrian reservoir, and thus into the River Raisin, to Monroe and into Lake Erie.

For full details on area violations and the impact these operations have on local citizens, visit the Environmentally Concerned Citizens

of South Central Michigan web site at www.nocafos.org/news.htm. If we have grown accustomed to periodic crises in the Great Lakes watershed (Lake Erie "dying" in the 1960s, the invasion by zebra mussels and other exotic species, threats of diversion of Great Lakes water, mercury and persistent pollutants in local fish), perhaps **this** issue will alert us to the need to make Earth Charter principles operative in our own backyards and communities.

- Margaret Weber

Coordinator of Corporate Responsibility



"We live right relationships with Earth Community."

- General Chapter '04