

Information Item: 15-03 Staff Report on Study of Surface Water Quality in Agricultural Watersheds Associated with Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations

Explanation:

Several environmental groups filed rule making petitions during the fall of 2007 to require water quality monitoring of animal operations in the state. The EMC granted this petition; however, it directed staff to conduct a stakeholder process to develop draft rules. The resulting proposed rules required some level of water quality monitoring for permitted animal operations. In response to several public hearings and two public comment periods, DENR and DWR (then DWQ) decided to pursue the possibility of conducting a study of the potential impacts of animal operations on water quality in place of the rules.

In July 2011, the EMC declined to adopt the proposed rules. In place of the proposed rules, the division, in collaboration with the U.S. Geological Survey, conducted a study to document whether swine feeding operations located in various Coastal Plain watersheds have a measureable effect on stream water quality. This presentation covers the purpose and design of the study, and the findings in the final report. Additional analysis of the USGS study data was conducted by third parties that reported alternate conclusions. These findings will also be presented as a part of this informational item.