



At a Glance

Catalyst for Improving the Environment

Why We Did This Review

The Office of Inspector General received a Hotline complaint claiming that U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 4 was not adequately overseeing Georgia's Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO) program. In response, we evaluated EPA's management controls over Georgia's National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) CAFO program.

Background

The Clean Water Act (CWA) prohibits the discharge of pollutants from any point source to navigable waters of the United States unless authorized under an NPDES permit issued by EPA or an authorized state. The CWA defines CAFOs as point sources. A CAFO is a facility where more than 1,000 animal units are confined and fed for a total of 45 days or more in any 12-month period.

For further information, contact our Office of Congressional, Public Affairs and Management at (202) 566-2391.

The full report is at:
www.epa.gov/oig/reports/2011/20110623-11-P-0274.pdf

Region 4 Should Strengthen Oversight of Georgia's Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation Program

What We Found

We found significant deficiencies in the Georgia Environmental Protection Division's (GEPD's) management and Region 4's oversight of the CAFO program. Region 4 gave Georgia's CAFO program a positive assessment because GEPD reported that all 48 of the CAFOs with liquid manure waste systems were inspected in 2010. However, our review identified a number of deficiencies for 34 of the 48 CAFOs Georgia inspected. CAFOs were operating without NPDES permits or Nutrient Management Plans, inspection reports were missing required components, and the Georgia Department of Agriculture was not assessing compliance with permit conditions. For its part, Region 4 did not assure that these components of Georgia's CAFO program met the requirements outlined in the 2007 memorandum of agreement between Region 4 and GEPD. As a result, there is a significant risk that the Georgia's CAFO program is failing to protect water quality. These facilities raise concerns about water quality because the animals produce large quantities of waste—many times more waste than humans annually. The discharge of waste into surface water is associated with a range of human health and ecological impacts, and contributes to degradation of the nation's surface waters.

What We Recommend

We recommend that the Regional Administrator, EPA Region 4, implement controls as stated in the 2007 memorandum of agreement between EPA Region 4 and GEPD to require enforcement data tracking between GEPD and Region 4, assure CAFO inspections are accurate and complete, and assure that GEPD takes timely and appropriate enforcement actions.

The region agreed with our recommendation. We agree that its actions meet the intent of the recommendation.