

Comment period extended once more on Minnesota's largest proposed dairy

BY MICHAEL JOHNSON
Agweek

The public comment period for a feedlot permit and on an environmental assessment worksheet for Minnesota's largest proposed dairy has been extended a second time, this time until May 7.

Riverview LLP is seeking an individual feedlot permit for West River Dairy. That dairy currently houses 7,855 head of dairy and the company is proposing an expanded farm that would add 11,000 more head, making it the biggest in the state.

On top of an extended comment period by the Minnesota Pollution

Control Agency, the agency is also planning a public meeting set from 6-8 p.m. on Tuesday, April 28, 2026, at the South Side Event Center and Reception Hall in Morris, Minnesota. That public meeting will be about these two specific comment opportunities. MPCA staff plan to provide information to attendees about the permitting process.

As of April 8, more than 800 comments were submitted for the EAW draft and 24 for the feedlot permit.

More on the project

The proposed West River facility will house 18,855 head of dairy in total

confinement barns. Liquid manure generated by the animals will be stored within earthen lined and concrete lined storage structures. Solid manure generated by the animals will be stockpiled at the facility. Process wastewater from the facility will be stored within lined structures. Manure generated at the facility will be applied to surrounding cropland at agronomic rates.

This permitting action includes proposed construction of animal holding areas, liquid manure storage areas, permanent stockpiles, feed storage areas at the facility. The animal unit capacity will

be increased from 10,997 AU to a final total of 26,397 AU.

This permit requires the facility to be designed, operated and maintained to prevent discharge to waters, except in an extreme storm event. Operators are required to land apply manure at agronomic rates, observe water setbacks, and maintain records of land application activities, including location, timing, and rate of application. Please refer to the draft permit for additional requirements.

Those still seeking to comment can do so online at <https://mpca.com-mentinput.com/?id=rW4x2Sf3bZ>.

There are opportunities to comment on both the draft feedlot permit and the draft environmental assessment worksheet.

In a previous interview with Agweek, Lisa Scheirer, feedlot program manager for the MPCA, said those commenting should prioritize facts that would help the MPCA in their decision-making process.

Riverview currently has three dairy farms in Stevens County, including the existing West River Dairy, and 12 farms in Minnesota. Their current farms in the state range in size from about 2,500 to 12,000. They are also working on the construction of large dairies in North Dakota

and South Dakota.

The public can review the draft environmental assessment worksheet and submit public comments by visiting the Smart Comment portal on the MPCA website or by mail to: Minnesota Pollution Control Agency c/o Charles Peterson, 520 Lafayette Road, St. Paul, MN 55155.

After the public comment period ends, the agency will review all comments and determine whether additional environmental review will be necessary. If the agency determines there is no need for additional environmental review, the project will proceed through permitting.

Green fertilizer funding shrinks but still afloat in the Minnesota Legislature talks

BY MICHAEL JOHNSON
Agweek

ST. PAUL — A proposal to provide \$10 million in funding for green ammonia projects shrunk to \$8 million following an amendment brought before the Minnesota House Agriculture Finance and Policy Committee on Wednesday, April 8.

House file 2103, also known as the Minnesota Made Ammonia Act, would appropriate money for an ammonia, hydrogen, and renewable energy certificate tracking system. It seeks to fund a green ammonia production facility and research into further production opportunities.

The bill originally asked for an appropriation of \$10 million from the general fund to the commissioner of commerce for a grant to the Midwest Renewable Energy Tracking System for technology that enables tradable ammonia, hydrogen and renewable energy certificates.

This bill also has a



Michael Johnson / Agweek

The University of Minnesota - Morris has a focus on renewable energy research, including solar, wind and the production of green ammonia. The University could receive further research funding through a bill focused on green ammonia in the Minnesota Legislature.

Senate companion bill, SF1710, with the same intention.

The bill was first heard on March 10 and was referred to the Energy Finance and Policy committee, where it remains.

It was brought back up on Wednesday in the ag committee so they could hear an amendment from bill sponsor Rep. Paul Anderson, R-Starbuck. That amendment sought to change that appropriation to \$8 million, broken into

four categories.

- \$2 million to Clean-Counts for technology that allows for the trading of ammonia, hydrogen and renewable energy certificates.
- \$500,000 for a grant to Great Plains Institute to identify areas in the state suitable for ammonia production with nearby wind or other curtailed power.
- \$4 million in fiscal year 2027 from the renewable development account to

the Minnesota Department of Agriculture for a grant to TalusAg for the production and operation of two green fertilizer production systems.

• \$1.5 million in fiscal year 2027 from the renewable development account to the University of Minnesota for research, development, outreach, and demonstration of energy systems that use hydrogen and ammonia production from renewable energy resources.

Anderson called it interesting and exciting to potentially produce green ammonia in Minnesota at a time when importing fertilizer from overseas is causing price and availability concerns.

“Not only the price increased, but availability is also going to be an issue this spring,” Anderson said of nitrogen fertilizer costs rising for farmers. “So this is a very timely look at a way that we can produce fertilizer here in Minnesota.”

Tristan Wilmes, vice president of agronomy for Central Farm Services, shared his support of the

bill. He outlined that farmers have cost, availability and uncertainty issues to deal with around nitrogen fertilizer. He said price changes of 300% have been seen in recent years, and a Middle East war was creating further uncertainty. He believes this would bring certainty.

“We forecast that farmers will benefit at a rate of roughly \$25 an acre across 250,000 acres. Multiply that times 10 years and that's the \$62 million,” Wilmes said of the return on investment.

Tristan Peitz, president of TalusAg, said farmers are held captive by global fertilizer markets and this bill would be a step towards giving Minnesota farmers power to make a cleaner product at home. Peitz said the TalusAg project near Blue Earth would produce around 10,000 to 14,000 tons of locally produced green ammonia, or around 5% of the state's current use.

Rachel Stuckey, executive director of the Minnesota Conservative Energy Forum, pointed out that this bill has bipartisan

support and support from a wide variety of industries. It also seeks to help not just one business in getting started.

“This bill isn't just about getting the first facility off the ground; it invests in the research and analysis to scale this across the state,” Stuckey said.

Rep. David Gottfried, DFL-Shoreview, said he was not a fan of a direct appropriation to a non-publicly accountable entity. He wondered why this was not opened up to competitive bidding, rather than naming a for-profit business that would receive these funds without any request for proposal.

Anderson sought to lessen concerns by explaining that there are few companies that specialize in this work of green ammonia production, and they should not miss a chance to work with this specific group that wants to build in the state.

Anderson hoped the bill would be heard by the Energy Finance and Policy committee next week.