



N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources

Release: IMMEDIATE
Date: November 15, 2002

Contact: Susan Massengale, 919/733-7015 ext.227
Distribution: Targeted

SMITHFIELD PACKING REISSUED WASTEWATER PERMIT FOR ITS TAR HEEL HOG SLAUGHTERHOUSE

RALEIGH – Smithfield Packing Company Inc. was today issued a wastewater permit for continued operation at its hog slaughterhouse in Tar Heel, Bladen County.

Renewed by the Division of Water Quality, the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit offers production flexibility while also requiring tighter monitoring and a commitment to environmental excellence and innovation. The facility is permitted to discharge up to 3 million gallons of treated wastewater per day into the Cape Fear River.

The permit, which becomes effective Dec. 1, sets a groundwater limit of 1.974 million gallons per day. It also requires Smithfield to seek an overall 10 percent reduction in its aquifer withdraw.

Production is capped at 176,000 hogs per week, with annual limits at 7,988,000 animals for the first year and 8,488,000 thereafter. The previous permit, issued in May 1999 after a settlement was reached between the company and environmental groups, limited annual production to 7,488,000 but allowed exceedences for those farms converting to innovative waste handling systems.

The increased production capacity is contingent upon Smithfield remaining compliant with the terms of its permit and other applicable water quality standards. If substantial violations are found, the annual production cap will revert to the previous level for the remainder of the permit cycle.

Within two years, Smithfield must develop and implement an Environmental Management System Program for the Tar Heel facility. That program will include aggressive environmental performance goals that address pollution prevention, a commitment to exceed compliance and annual improvements to performance. The company will have to identify ways to reduce withdraws from the groundwater aquifer by 10 percent.

Farms built after the permit issuance date would not be able to sell their hogs to Smithfield unless they employ innovative technologies. A statewide moratorium on new and expanding swine operations that do not have innovative waste systems is already in effect until September 1, 2003.

Other permit conditions include the following:

- Increase monitoring for ammonia, biochemical oxygen demand, total suspended solids and flow from five days per week to daily year-round.

(continued)
(page 2)

- Prohibit the processing of any finishing hog from a Smithfield owned and operated farm that has received a final penalty assessment for discharging animal waste to surface waters or wetlands, or where a grower has applied waste in excess of an approved application rate. A non-compliant grower would be under such prohibition for 12 months.
- Within one year, the company must develop a model EMS Program for hog farms and encourage swine farms with whom it is doing business, through contract or independent purchase options, to participate. The Department of Environment and Natural Resources will provide the model EMS to other swine farms on an as-requested basis. (Farms that Smithfield owns east of the Mississippi River have already achieved EMS certification as part of an earlier agreement between the company and the state Attorney General's Office.)
- Smithfield will continue to provide DWQ a monthly report on the number of hogs processed. The company will be assessed a \$200 penalty for every hog slaughtered above maximum production caps.

DWQ held a public hearing Aug. 12 to accept comment on the permit. A hearing officer reviewed those comments and recommended approval with several changes including the groundwater limits.

For a copy of the NPDES permit and a map showing the location of the wastewater discharge, people can write or call Mrs. Christie Jackson, N.C. Division of Water Quality/NPDES Unit, 1617 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, NC 27699-1617; telephone, (919) 733-5083, extension 538. The public can also view the documents at DWQ's Central Office at 512 N. Salisbury St., Raleigh, or in the division's Fayetteville Regional Office at 225 Green St.

#####