

Jeff Gillespie, Wayne Farms, contract poultry

5 producer.

6 MR. GILLESPIE: Thank you, governor. I
7 appreciate you all having this hearing today. I am
8 a poultry and cattle farmer. I raise broilers for
9 Wayne Farms in Danville, Arkansas which 100
10 miles or so south, southeast of here. I have a
11 bachelor's of science from Arkansas Tech
12 University in Russellville and I used to actually be
13 a broiler field rep for Wayne Farms for four years,
14 so I have a little bit of experience from the
15 company's side as well as production side. I also
16 hope you won't hold it against me I served as a
17 legislator in Arkansas for seven years. So anyway,
18 I'm also on the ARCS. They're the Yell County
19 Conservation District in Yell County currently.

20 I am one of those, I guess some people
21 call it mega farm, is the term that was used. I
22 have 12 broiler houses and with capacity probably
23 260,000 total, something like that. I own about
24 700 acres and I run about 180 cows. I think --
25 and I really was glad I came today because I've

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1 learned a lot and it's been a good continuing
2 education. Poultry producers, I don't think, are
3 required for continuing education, but it's been
4 good for me.

5 MR. CARLIN: We're not handing out
6 credits.

7 MR. GILLESPIE: Anyway, I think that a
8 lot of the issues that I was concerned with have
9 been addressed, one being, obviously, I think we
10 have rounded the corner and are rounding the
11 corner in the use of poultry litter where it's
12 needed and I know that on my farm I started years
13 ago fencing off my lower wetlands, planting trees
14 down there and I've just planted another 100 acres
15 and put in the repairing buffer program, the CRP,
16 the CRP program to maintain water quality and to
17 enhance water quality.

18 I think -- you know, I know in the last few
19 years we have put more emphasis on best
20 management practices and in our county we have a
21 very good water quality technician that helps write
22 plans for producers to helps them more utilize
23 their litter better and their resources better. And
24 I think, you know, a lot of people, I think, try to
25 call the big farms the bad guys and I think really

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1 having a larger farm allows me to do a few things

2 better because I have a little more cash flow and I
3 can do a few things. There are so many little
4 things you have to do that if you've got more
5 volume you can spend more time doing those
6 things and I think that's one help.

7 One thing I wanted to touch -- two more
8 things I wanted to touch base on. One was the
9 fear of regulation. I know that there were
10 regulations proposed that was spoken to earlier
11 that would limit the amount of pollutants coming
12 out of the exhaust out of the house and I think
13 that's very concerning. You know, who sets the
14 limits, how arbitrary are they, and I find it
15 interesting that we're checking the emission there
16 at the house where I don't have anybody living
17 within a quarter of a mile of my chicken houses
18 and most of my houses the effluent is blowing into
19 a pine plantation. And so I think, you know, to be
20 quite fair we ought to go to the nearest town and
21 see if I'm affecting them or the nearest population
22 area.

23 As in any other thing, when you're talking
24 about wastewater treatment plants, you bring the
25 simulation capacity you have depending on where

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1 your -- the amount of water you have there to
2 simulate what your effluent is depends on your
3 requirements for your discharge. And I think
4 that's somewhat similar in poultry. I'm pretty far
5 removed from population and I don't really see why
6 the effluent right out of the back of the chicken
7 house is going to affect somebody two miles down
8 the road.

9 The thing that I think to sum up that we
10 can do, as I said, I think we've rounded the
11 corner. We're making progress in using our litter
12 and our resources better, but one thing we've got
13 to do is continue funding in our area for water
14 quality technicians and we've just had two people
15 in our local NRCS office retire and I think we're
16 going to get one of the two guys replaced and the
17 two guys had all that they could do before.

18 And I think that it really will help --
19 we've got to maintain funding for those water
20 quality technicians and those NRCS people because
21 they have the expertise and have the resources
22 readily available to help out those management
23 plans and make sure that they're carried out and
24 take that load off the farmer or part of that load
25 off the farmer, and I think that's very, very

1 important. With that, I will entertain any
2 questions.

3 MR. CARLIN: Very good. I want to ask
4 you in regard to your concern about regulation,
5 I've had no practical experience to share your
6 concern, but let's say hypothetically we could be
7 reasonable, which maybe is possible, then how
8 would you feel? In other words, you're not saying
9 there is no problem, you're just concerned that if
10 there's going to be regulation they might not take
11 into consideration that population is far removed
12 from you versus somebody right next door?

13 MR. GILLESPIE: That is correct, and I
14 don't mean to say there's not a problem.

15 MR. CARLIN: That's what I wanted to
16 make sure.

17 MR. GILLESPIE: And I'm sorry I'm not as
18 polished as some of the previous presenters, but
19 one thing I want to come across with, you know,
20 we're using best management practices and I'm
21 going to do those things that I know are out there.
22 You know, the repairing buffer deal is an example.

23 I guess my question is why do we have to
24 measure what's coming out to know what our limit
25 needs to be? And maybe I'm not scientifically

1 aware enough to figure that out, but we ought to
2 know what the limit is or what's safe before we
3 figure out what's coming out of the pipe. And to
4 me, you don't need me affecting -- you don't need
5 the producer affecting what's right and you don't
6 need people on the other side affecting what's
7 right. We need to know what's right and then try
8 to meet it, whether that be good or bad for me.

9 MR. CARLIN: Michael?

10 MR. BLACKWELL: Thank you for
11 appearing today. Just one question. When you
12 said we've kind of turned the corner, I want you to
13 again explain what that means. And if that's true
14 today, I really would appreciate it if you would tell
15 me about any concerns you might have with the
16 population growth being as high as 1,100 million
17 over the next 15 years or so and what that means
18 compared to today.

19 MR. GILLESPIE: Okay. Well, in
20 rounding the corner I meant being involved in the
21 industry personally since 1992 when I went to
22 work for Wayne Farms, you know, I guess, the
23 further we've gone the more aware we have become
24 of environmental issues. I think that's safe to say

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1 right at the beginning of the time in our area when
2 we started writing -- well, most people started
3 getting water quality plans or nutrient
4 management plans.

5 I guess, what I'm saying is that's become
6 more and more important and I think we're finally
7 getting all of those in place and some of them -- I
8 think mine is being rewritten for the third time.
9 However, there are people out there that for
10 whatever reason are probably just getting theirs
11 written for the first time. And I think when we do
12 that and we keep pounding the emphasis for
13 getting those plans and making sure that they're
14 following, that's not going to be a 30 day process
15 for us to figure out what we've done has helped.
16 And I'm not saying we -- I mean, I think we need to
17 do whatever we need to to protect the environment.
18 I think most poultry farmers feel that way.

19 MR. CARLIN: Tom?

20 MR. HAYES: Sometimes poultry
21 producers are kind of characterized as pawns of
22 big companies. Here you're a guy with a four year
23 degree, you worked for the big company and you
24 still chose to go into poultry farming, why?

25 MR. GILLESPIE: Well, I guess --

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1 MR. HAYES: It's not a trick question.

2 MR. GILLESPIE: Well, I mean, we talked
3 about it a lot on the way up here. I mean, it's just
4 -- there's been poultry in my area since the '50s.
5 My grandfather had a couple poultry houses that
6 were destroyed by a tornado and it's a good way to
7 make a living in our area. I was talking with your
8 communications guy outside and I was talking
9 about sitting down and going through some of
10 these farm bills and a lot of these fact sheets that
11 have been talked about and I told him I don't have
12 time to sit down, much less sit down and go
13 through that.

14 Well, that's -- you know, I mean, it's a
15 low return, high time investment job, but as I say,
16 it's better than a real job. Mr. Penzo doesn't call
17 me at -- he's the broiler manager that came with
18 me and that's a person whose position I reported
19 to years ago, and if I wasn't there at 7:30, they
20 were looking for me wondering why, and he doesn't
21 call me now at 7:30 in the morning to see if I'm at
22 the chicken house.

23 MR. CARLIN: Very good, and we thank
24 you.
25 MR. GILLESPIE: Thank you.