

Capitol LINK

CURRENT ISSUES AFFECTING WISCONSIN AGRICULTURE & AGRI-BUSINESS

October 2008

DOT Studies Truck Size and Weight Restrictions: Legislative Proposal Expected in January 2009

By Jordan Lamb

As directed by the Wisconsin Legislature in 2007 Wisconsin Act 20, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (DOT) has formed a “Wisconsin Truck Size and Weight Study Advisory Group” that is in the process of studying Wisconsin’s truck size and weight laws. The Advisory Group is required to make recommendations for statutory changes to the Legislature no later than January 1, 2009.

The Advisory Group has met twice since August and plans to meet again in November and in December. The Group is currently considering the following five vehicle configurations for detailed analysis and other size/weight law changes:

1. **6-axle 90,000 pound Semi with maximum trailer length of 53 feet:** Would be allowed with a permit on Class A Highways. Allowed on Class B highways if determined acceptable by Permit Office. Not allowed on Interstate system or National Network. May be additional safety requirements.
2. **7-axle 97,000 pound Semi with maximum trailer length of 53 feet:** Would be allowed with a permit on Class A Highways. Allowed on Class B highways if determined acceptable by Permit Office. Not allowed on Interstate system or National Network. May be additional safety requirements.
3. **8-axle 108,000 pound Twin with maximum trailer length of 28.5 feet each:** Would be allowed with a permit on Class A Highways that are Designated Long Truck Routes or 75-foot Restricted Truck Routes and Class B highways if determined acceptable by Permit Office. Not allowed on Interstate system or National Network. May be additional safety requirements.
4. **7-axle 80,000 pound Single-Unit with 45 foot maximum length:** Would be allowed with a permit on Class A Highways. Allowed on Class B highways if determined acceptable by Permit Office. May be additional safety requirements. Operable on the Interstate system and National Network system.

5. **6-axle 98,000 pound Semi with maximum trailer length of 53 feet:** Would be allowed with a permit on Class A Highways. Allowed on Class B highways if determined acceptable by Permit Office. Not allowed on Interstate system or National Network. May be additional safety requirements.
6. **Extend Frozen Road Declaration's Allowable Permitted Overweight Operations.** The Group is considering a proposal to extend the 5-axle 90,000 pound limit and 6-axle 98,000 pound limit during Frozen Road Declaration to all loads. Currently, the frozen road declaration is applicable to 5-axle 90,000 pound vehicles allowed when carrying raw forest products or agricultural products, 6-axle 98,000 pound vehicles allowed when carrying raw forest products or salt or abrasives.

It is unclear what the Advisory Group will propose with regard to overweight permits for other vehicle configurations or whether the Group will maintain current non-permitted size and weight exceptions such as the non-permitted exceptions for fall harvest of certain commodities. It appears that those issues will be discussed at future meetings.

On December 2, 2008, the DOT is holding a meeting for stakeholders interested in the proposed revisions in Madison. Stakeholders are encouraged to attend the meeting in order to present comments on the proposals prior to the Advisory Group's final meeting on December 17, 2008.

All of the Advisory Group meeting materials and meeting notices are available online at <http://www.topslab.wisc.edu/workgroups/wtsws.html>.

White House Approves Revised CAFO Rule

By Jordan Lamb

In response to the *Waterkeeper Alliance v. EPA* U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals decision issued in 2005, which vacated the EPA's 2003 Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations ("CAFO") rule, the EPA has drafted a revised CAFO rule that was approved by the White House on October 8, 2008.

The new rule allows certain livestock operations to bypass Clean Water Act permit requirements if they voluntarily certify that they do not discharge animal waste into waterways and it also ensures that information contained in a livestock producer's nutrient management plan is available for public comment, is reviewed by the NPDES permit authority and is incorporated into their NPDES permit. The full text of the rule will not be available for review until it is signed by EPA administrator, Stephen Johnson.

Farm groups and environmental groups *both* sued the EPA over the 2003 CAFO rule, which expanded the number of livestock operations that were covered by CAFO regulations and which included requirements to address the land application of manure from CAFOs

Wisconsin Political Trivia:

Question: Who is that woman on top of the Capitol dome?

Answer: The hollow bronze statue covered in gold leaf that is perched atop the Capitol dome is officially called, “Wisconsin,” but, many Wisconsinites mistakenly call her “Miss Forward.”* “Wisconsin” holds a globe with an eagle in her left hand and her right arm is outstretched to symbolize the state motto, “Forward.”

* Miss Forward is actually the name of *another sculpture* that currently resides at the Wisconsin State Historical Society.

Capitol Link Details

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