

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media contact

Kalie Hudson, Marketing and Sales Manager
Powell Gardens, Kansas City's botanical garden
816-345-0002 * khudson@powellgardens.org
www.powellgardens.org



**POWELL
GARDENS**

Kansas City's botanical garden

1609 NW U.S. Highway 50
Kingsville, MO 64061

816.697.2600
powellgardens.org

MDNR Grants Permit; Powell Gardens Files Appeal and Injunction Against Controversial CAFO

Kingsville, MO, June 19, 2018 – Powell Gardens has filed for an injunction and will be filing an administrative appeal in response to the Missouri Department of Natural Resource's issuance of an operating permit to Valley Oaks Steak Company for a confined animal feeding operation (CAFO).

The appeal and injunction are an effort to protect Kansas City's botanical garden -- which attracts more than 100,000 visitors a year -- from the harmful and irreparable effects it will experience as a result of the expansion of this factory farm.



Despite considerable community opposition, MDNR approved the permit June 15, for the expansion of the CAFO located just three miles west of Powell Gardens on 50 Highway and neighboring homes. The permit allows Valley Oaks to confine 6,999 head of cattle – just one cow shy of MDNR's more stringent Class 1A regulations, which require regular monitoring and mitigation of odor emissions.

The facility -- which will be the largest cattle CAFO in Missouri -- includes several sources of environmental contamination from on-site animal housing, waste storage, slaughtering and retail meat market. Some call it "state of the art," but environmental experts for Kansas City-based SES Inc. have calculated the cattle will generate 1,547 tons of feces, urine and bedding material a day.

The list of adverse environmental impacts that are of concern to Powell Gardens and its Lone Jack neighbors includes gaseous odors from bones, urine, blood and carcasses from the barn and slaughterhouse; wind-blown particulates from manure spread at Valley Oaks and surrounding land parcels; ground and surface water contamination; pests that endanger flora and fauna; decreasing land values; and wear and tear on the local infrastructure.

“The stakes are high because there will be a range of losses that cannot be remedied or compensated by any amount of damages,” said Aimee Davenport, an environmental lawyer and partner with Stinson Leonard Street, who filed the appeal and injunction in Jackson County.

Powell Gardens is a 970-acre oasis of rolling hills and lush gardens featuring more than 6,000 varieties of plants. The “living museum” is a destination for school children on field trips, chefs who cook gourmet meals from the bounty of the Heartland Harvest Gardens -- one of the nation’s largest edible landscapes -- and brides and grooms who get married in the chapel designed by E. Fay Jones, a student of Frank Lloyd Wright.

“Our gardens provide beauty and respite, but also lessons in diversity and sustainability. As the stewards of this natural resource, we are in a major moment that calls us to preserve and protect it for future generations,” said Tabitha Schmidt, CEO/President of Powell Gardens, adding she would rather be celebrating the Gardens’ 30th anniversary year than fighting for the institution’s long-term survival.

“We’re a non-profit. Lots of people have been asking what they can do to help?” Schmidt said. “Becoming a member is one way, and we’re launching an urgent fundraising campaign to help fight a situation that absolutely threatens our survival.”

Support for Powell Gardens has come from individuals and organizations, including The Garden Conservancy, a non-profit organization dedicated to saving and sharing outstanding American gardens for education and inspiration for future generations.

“Powell Gardens is an economic generator in its own right,” the conservancy’s President James Brayton Hall wrote in a letter to the Missouri Clean Water Commission urging them to deny the permit. “It is also part of our cultural heritage and is an asset to the people of the greater Kansas City region, and as such, it is worth protection.”

As legal costs mount, an anonymous donor pledged \$6,999 to kick-start fundraising efforts to halt the CAFO’s operation.

“We’re trying to combat the caged animal facility just down the road from us,” says the donor, a long-time Powell Gardens supporter who lives on 5 acres located 1 ½ miles from CAFO. “It was poetic justice that we use an amount that mirrors the 6,999 cows that we are fighting.”

As a California transplant who has lived, worked and raised a family in the community since the mid ‘80s, she urges others to contribute what they can to the fight. “This is our community. If you don’t put yourself into the fight for what is right, you’re going to be left with what is left,” she says.

To make a donation, go to powellgardens.org/CAFO.