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NEWS RELEASE

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FUHRMANN MINK FARM, INC. ORDERED TO REPLACE WELLS AND PAY PENALTIES

MADISON – Fuhrmann Mink Farm, Inc., which operated a mink production facility near the unincorporated Calumet County village of St. Anna for over 50 years, has agreed to replace several neighboring wells, to remediate nitrate contamination at the site of its former mink farm, and to pay \$15,000 to settle state claims brought under Wisconsin's water pollution prevention and spill remediation laws.

Wisconsin law prohibits unpermitted wastewater discharges, and it requires reporting and remediation of all hazardous substance spills. According to the complaint, Fuhrmann Mink Farm installed an onsite disposal system for its food process wastewater in 1979, but never connected this system to its waste stream. The State of Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources discovered this disposal system when it was attempting to determine the source of high nitrate levels found in several St. Anna wells. A subsequent investigation of the mink farm property showed high levels of nitrate in soil where mink manure was deposited, and in the shallow groundwater under the former mink pen area.

The safe drinking water maximum contaminant level for nitrate as nitrogen is 10 parts per million. People expecting or caring for infants are advised to have their wells tested for nitrate because infants are more susceptible to methemoglobinemia, an interference with the blood's ability to transport oxygen caused by the biological conversion of nitrate to nitrite. This condition is known as blue-baby syndrome.

Based on the high nitrate levels at the Furhmann Mink Farm, DNR classified the property as a spill site. Furhmann has agreed to remediate the site as required by Wisconsin's Spills Law. Furhmann also agreed to replace or offer to replace seven neighboring wells that produced water with high nitrate levels. Thus far, five wells have been replaced. Furhmann has offered

to replace a sixth, and if it replaces a seventh well, it will pay \$10,000 in forfeitures, fees and costs.

“It is necessary to construct, operate and maintain industrial wastewater treatment systems in order to protect human health and the environment,” said Attorney General J.B. Van Hollen. “Groundwater is the sole source of drinking water in the area, so it is critical to protect this drinking water for the future of the St. Anna area.”

Assistant Attorney General Diane L. Milligan prosecuted the case. Calumet County Circuit Court Judge Donald A. Poppy approved the settlement.

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