



Master Matrix

ICA Fact Sheet
October 2017

What is the Master Matrix?

- The Master Matrix, adopted in 2002, is a scoring system used by counties and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to evaluate construction permit applications for confinement feeding operations of more than 1,000 animal units (1,000 cattle). Open feedlots (including barns with an outside area of more than 10% inside area) are not subject to the Master Matrix.
- County supervisors in Iowa can determine annually whether or not they will also use the matrix in their counties. County supervisors in counties where the Master Matrix has been adopted must score the matrix for each confinement operation construction permit application received during that year. DNR accepts that score if it passes. If it does not pass at the county level, then the DNR independently scores the Matrix for the final determination. Counties can also submit formal comments to DNR concerning individual applications and recommend DNR approval or denial of the application independent of the Matrix score. If a county chooses not to adopt the Master Matrix, then the construction permit application does not have to have a Matrix and, therefore, DNR does not score the Matrix.

Efforts to Revise the Master Matrix

- At least 17 counties around the state have passed resolutions asking the Governor and Legislature to revise the Master Matrix to require operations to meet higher standards in order to be granted a building permit. Some of these resolutions include requests that the state place a moratorium on construction of new facilities until legislation revising the Master Matrix is passed.
- Two bills were introduced in the 2017 legislative session on the Master Matrix. Though such legislation was introduced, the legislature took no action this session to revisit the Master Matrix.
- In July 2017 Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement and Food and Water Watch petitioned the Environmental Protection Commission (EPC), a panel of nine citizens who provide policy oversight over Iowa's environmental protection efforts, asking the EPC to revise the Master Matrix and adopt proposals to offer fewer points possible and require more points in order to receive a satisfactory score. ICA and other ag groups opposed the petition, and the EPC denied the request.
- Proponents of raising standards within the Master Matrix argue that the high approval rate indicates that the current requirements are too easy to meet. In fact, the high percentage of approved Master Matrices shows that producers simply plan ahead and work to acquire the necessary points before submission.

What could revising the Master Matrix mean for cattlemen?

- Increased restriction and limitations on siting of confinement operations would restrain production, limit economic growth, and reduce opportunity for future generations to come back to the family farm. Tougher regulations will not help young people get into agriculture.
- Many rural Iowa communities depend on agricultural enterprises, particularly livestock production, to keep their local economies thriving. Not only do these family businesses provide protein to feed a growing world population, they also employ local citizens, create revenue for local businesses, and support local schools by providing opportunities for families.

What are cattlemen doing to protect and preserve natural resources?

- Cattle producers work to keep the soil, water, and air healthy for future generations. They also have a vested interest in protecting these assets now, as their livelihoods and businesses depend on them.
- Cattlemen employ numerous conservation practices and advanced technology to protect and preserve natural resources.
 - For example, cattlemen, especially those with confined animal feeding operations, make the most of their resources by harvesting beans, corn and crop residues to use as feed and bedding. Then, they return nutrients to the soil through manure application.
- Producers invest in experts for consultation -- such as environmental consultants, engineers, and scientists -- to build facilities that implement the high standards of the Master Matrix.

Where does ICA stand on the Master Matrix?

- Current ICA policy reads:
 - BI-PPLEM-47 Environmental Quality/Local Control (2013)
 - WHEREAS, clean water and air are essential to the health and well-being of all producers in the cattle industry; and
 - WHEREAS, water and air are precious resources that we manage to the benefit of social environmental and economic values that are important to the stability of our industry and with the understanding of our unique needs.
 - THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the appropriate agencies recognize the state's abilities to best manage the resources within their jurisdictions and that environmental laws shall not be interpreted to be more restrictive than statute.
 - BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, Iowa environmental quality protection standards and regulations be established at the state level.
 - BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Iowa Cattlemen's Association oppose local control of environmental standards and regulations.
 - BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Iowa Cattlemen's Association supports statewide consistency of the Master Matrix application for counties that adopt the Master Matrix.