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Arizona Group Files Lawsuit to Halt Controversial Million-Bird Egg-Laying Factory

Lawsuit charges facility will permanently damage surrounding community, create a nuisance and pose serious public health threats

Tonopah, AZ—August 5, 2014—Today, the citizens' group Save Tonopah Oppose Poultry Plant (STOPP) filed a lawsuit in the Superior Court of the State of Arizona in Maricopa County against Hickman's Egg Ranch, Inc. to halt construction of a massive industrial egg processing facility in Tonopah. Hickman's Desert Pride facility is slated to initially house 2.2 million laying hens in a confined area, and will eventually house nearly 12 million birds at the industrial processing plant. The facility will stand within a few hundred feet of Tonopah residences, schools, businesses and pristine natural hot springs, threatening the public health, property values and the local economy.

"This isn't a case of 'not in my backyard,' this shouldn't be in anyone's backyard," said STOPP attorney, Howard Shanker of The Shanker Law Firm. "Even if operated responsibly, this facility will foul the air, breed swarms of flies and promote myriad other negative impacts on the community, human health and the environment. Our basic message to Hickman is this: Put this facility someplace where it will not harm preexisting residential and business areas."

Based on conservative scientific estimates, the annual waste output from a 2.5 million chicken egg operation is enough to create a manure pile 5 feet high, 10 feet wide and 7 miles long. This means that, at capacity, the Hickman plant will generate nearly 5 times that amount, producing millions of pounds of animal waste equivalent to a chicken manure wall nearly 35 miles long -- the distance from Phoenix to Mesa and back.

According to the STOPP lawsuit, if the facility is allowed to operate it will constitute both a public and private nuisance. Serious community concerns include risk of irreparable damage to public health standards, groundwater safety, air quality and overall quality of life. Additionally, Tonopah's vital hot springs tourism could collapse with the introduction of the Hickman facility. As highlighted by the plaintiffs, many would avoid visiting natural hot springs that are within yards of the poultry processing factory. The impact on Tonopah's decades-old, tourism-driven motel and restaurant economy would be devastating.

"It doesn't take too much imagination to appreciate the disastrous impact two open wastewater lagoons containing the building washout blood, manure and feathers of millions of chickens will have on a community," said STOPP President, Linda Butler. "Add to this the fact that these lagoons are located in

a floodplain with the possibility of overflowing during monsoon seasons and contaminating our aquifer, and you have a good explanation of why we're fighting to stop Hickman from building."

Hickman's Egg Ranch, Inc. is an Arizona corporation that currently owns and operates two egg-laying and fertilizer processing operations in Maricopa County. Both have a history of receiving public complaints involving foul odors, rodent infestation, feather and insect proliferation, and noise pollution.

"I have seen what happens to communities across the country when these type of operations move in." said Genell Pridgen, a ninth-generation poultry farmer and field coordinator for the national non-profit [Socially Responsible Agricultural Project](#). "However, I've never seen an industrial poultry facility the size and scope of what has been proposed here. The mountain of manure, the overwhelming smell from the buildings and lagoons, and the bacteria-laden feathers blowing through residential neighborhoods will be off-the-charts if the Hickman facility is not stopped."

Copies of the STOPP anticipatory nuisance lawsuit filing are available by request.

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About Socially Responsible Agricultural Project (SRAP)

Socially Responsible Agricultural Project provides free, professional assistance to communities working to protect themselves from factory farms and their impact on local communities and populations, and to those who are trying to reclaim agriculture by producing and marketing sustainable agricultural goods. More information can be found at www.sraproject.org.

About Save Tonopah Oppose Poultry Plant (STOPP)

Save Tonopah Oppose Poultry Plant is a not-for-profit community organization working to protect the safety of their local community and the quiet use and enjoyment of residents' property, as well as to encourage and maintain the financial health and growth of businesses in the Tonopah community. More information can be found at www.facebook.com/STOPPsavetonopah.