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Wisconsin Ag Connection

Hundreds Turn Out for Rosendale Dairy Expansion Hearing



The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources will have plenty of differing opinions to consider before making a final decision on whether to grant a proposed megafarm in eastern Wisconsin its necessary permits. On Thursday, the agency held a public hearing on the proposed expansion of the Rosendale Dairy in Fond du Lac County; and people from both sides of the issue came out in full force. The forum was held in Ripon, where nearly 500 residents were signed up to share their

feelings on the DNR's Environmental Impact Statement--which will be needed before granting a wastewater discharge permit.

Jim Ostrom, one of the farm's partners, talked about the farm's soil nutrient needs, explained how they invested \$6 million in environmental technology, and said they have met or exceeded other regulatory requirements.

"Rosendale Dairy is the most publicly scrutinized and heavily regulated dairy business in Wisconsin," Ostrom said. "We have completed or are working toward 30 permits and other regulatory approvals related to local, state and federal rules. But beyond our extensive efforts to protect the environment, the scale and efficiency of our farm creates opportunities to reduce the carbon footprint of our production and provide real benefits."

Other farm owners from around the state were also in attendance to support the project and to talk about the consequences this particular case could bring to other farms that may want to expand in the future. Testimonies were also made by the individuals who planned the farm's nutrient management program, designed the manure handling facilities and studied the operation's potential air emissions and ammonia output.

But those who are opposed to the idea of building such a large farm were also on hand. One neighbor said he was concerned about well water contamination because the farm's manure will be spread in all four directions of his home. Others said they felt 8,000 cows were just too many animals to be placed in one small area.

Despite the size of the gathering, the presentations were mostly peaceful. A larger number of the attendees wore either a blue hat if they were in favor of the farm, or a red hat that said the word "no."

Rosendale Dairy is proposing to construct a large dairy facility capable of housing and milking up to 4,000 dairy cows and 150 beef cattle--or a combination of 5,750 Animal Units. Phase II of the project, which is double the size, would be built a year later. The facility will include freestall barns, a milking parlor, manure handling, storage equipment, feed storage, leachate collection and stormwater basins.

Projections show that the farm will annually produce about 46 million gallons of liquid waste, consisting primarily of liquid manure that will be stored on site in the waste storage facilities and land applied every year. The operation has submitted a nutrient management plan that would use 5,631 acres of cropland for land application activities.

Meanwhile, the DNR will be taking written public comments through February 4. If the agency fails to grant the necessary permits, the farm will be limited to holding no more than 700 cows

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