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News

By Kaleigh Ward

## **Coming soon: Largest dairy farm in the state**

- Rosendale, Wis. is the sight of Wisconsin's newest and largest dairy farm.
- Though construction has been in progress since this summer, some are still in opposition due to concerns about pollution
- Supporters say the farm will help improve Wisconsin's economy, and will help Wisconsin's dairy industry become more prominent.
- Though the owners have received necessary building permits, they are still waiting on a permit concerning pollution discharge elimination.

### **Rosendale, Wis., welcoming 4,000 cows to new home**

The town of Rosendale in Fond du Lac County, Wis., will soon become home to Wisconsin's largest dairy farm when construction is completed.

Jim Ostrom, co-owner of Rosendale Dairy, said the operation has received all of the necessary building permit approvals and has already submitted materials required for the Wisconsin Pollutant Discharge Elimination System wastewater permit.

He said Wisconsin's Department of Natural Resources has completed an environmental assessment, and the department will soon schedule a public hearing to discuss the wastewater permit.

Ostrom said the farm will start out with 4,000 cows and will employ state-of-the-art computer systems to track the health and the milk production of each cow.

"Wisconsin's economy is facing challenging times, and our \$70 million investment in this farm shows confidence in our state's future," he said.

Ostrom said Rosendale Dairy is receiving support from many local vendors, neighboring businesses, crop farmers, and community residents who see the benefits the dairy farm will provide. He said the Wisconsin Dairy Business Association has also been a major source of support.

"We are working to minimize our carbon footprint in a variety of innovative ways," Ostrom said.

Ostrom said the farm will use an on-site manure processing facility, which will produce enough fertilizer to replace up to 90 percent of the fossil fuel-based fertilizer that farmers use.

Jamie Saul, an attorney for Midwest Environmental Advocates, said the group is opposed to the construction of this farm.

He said the MEA represents citizens in Rosendale who are concerned about this project. The concern is mostly due to air and water pollution risks, he said.

"It is going to be the largest dairy farm in the state ... which creates a high risk of pollution if manure gets into creeks and groundwater," Saul said.

Saul said he does not believe this operation is necessary, though he said there is no doubt the dairy industry is rapidly expanding. He said there are other models that could present better alternatives and could eliminate health risks and pollution concerns.

Nitrogen and phosphorous are the most worrisome pollutants, he said.

Fond du Lac County Executive Allen Buechel said the largest group opposing this project consists of the people who live in the immediate area of the farm.

"However, a lot of people will benefit economically and support the farm, but if you don't see a benefit in it, you are more likely to oppose it," Buechel said.

Buechel said there has been concern about the odor of manure, water contamination and pollution. He said if the farm is constructed in accordance with laws and if manure removal is properly controlled, there should not be a problem with water contamination.

"Fond du Lac County has several cheese plants that are in need of milk suppliers," Buechel said. "The farther away they need to go for the milk, the more likely they are to move their farms completely."

Buechel said the construction of this farm will not only affect farmers, it will also affect Wisconsin's economy.

Milk production has been declining in Wisconsin for the past decade, said Peggy Dierickx, communications director for the Dairy Business Association.

"This year, however, it has started to rise. This is very good for Wisconsin's economy because it means we are continuing to be the dairy state," Dierickx said.

Dierickx said she lives near one of the owner's other dairy farms. They are very neat and work hard to keep the odor under control, she said.

"They are very conscientious people and are very respectful of their surroundings," Dierickx said.