The Yahara Pride Farms pilot certification program is underway to help farmers identify their farms’ current conservation strengths and weaknesses, which will provide a clear path for phosphorus reduction opportunities.

Certification will provide incentives, recognition, discounts on products and services as well as paperwork reduction for the producer.

Newly hired Conservation Resource Managers, Dennis Frame and Joe Connors, have evaluated over 3,300 acres of farmland to date.

Along the way they have identified excellent management practices currently in place and have also given helpful guidance to farmers in how to further limit phosphorus runoff.

Throughout the assessed acres, buffer strips and grass waterways have been identified as strengths to the Yahara Watershed.

Suggestions have been made related to counteracting erosion in the fields and along field roads which will be helpful in formulating future conservation plans for area farmers.

Certification Benefits Include:
- Discounted services & products
- Opportunities to test new technologies in exchange for conservation efforts
- Recognition of Certification
- Increased soil and water quality
- Cleaner watershed reflects cleaner lakes...for generations to come

Read more about certification program inside
Yahara Pride Farms is happy to introduce our two Conservation Resource Managers, Dennis Frame and Joe Connors. Their expertise is a crucial component to the success of the certification program and will be used to evaluate conservation strengths and weaknesses in the efforts to reduce phosphorus runoff.

Joe Connors grew up in the Mt. Horeb area on his parents’ family farm. After high school, Joe attended the Short-Course Program and gained experience through on the job training. He has had experience working at Frontier FS for 15 years.

Joe said he joined Yahara Pride Farms because he thinks it is a worthy organization that has goals and ideas he likes and supports. While working with our organization Joe says, “I have thoroughly enjoyed my day-to-day responsibilities and experiences. The farmers throughout the area are excellent to work with because of their open thinking and positive outlook.”

Dennis Frame became the co-director of UW Discovery Farms program in 2001. He is involved in the day-to-day management of the program (funding, personnel, data collection and maintaining the partnerships) as well as teaching and speaking at numerous field days/workshops throughout the state and region. Dennis and his family live on a small farm in northern Trempealeau County where they maintain a herd of beef cattle.

This summer, Yahara Pride Farms will be hosting educational farm tours at various local farms around Dane County. The tours are an opportunity to promote community awareness of farmer-led initiatives to reduce excess phosphorus in the Yahara Watershed.

The tours entail observing the management practices farmers have adopted to keep the phosphorus on their fields and out of the waterways. This initiative is also know as “the closed loop approach”. Tour participants will learn about the entire phosphorus cycle as well as best management practices that are effective at keeping phosphorus on the field. Benefits of nutrient management plans, soil testing, crop rotation, and different types of manure applications will be explained. In addition, management practices such as buffer strips and grassed waterway will be seen during the tours.

These tours not only promote the economics of agriculture, but also leave participants with a better understanding of management practice efforts put forth and employed by farmers to close the phosphorus loop. Educational tours are crucial in creating alliances between urban and rural entities and understanding the challenges that both face in cleaning up the Yahara Watershed. With an educated community working together, a self-regulated and feasible plan will propel us forward to protect and improve soil and water quality in the Yahara Watershed…for generations to come.

If you would like to be notified of upcoming tours, please contact Rachel at rachel@yaharapridefarms.org

Thank you to Carl F. Statz and Sons for their generous donation of a Polaris Ranger to Yahara Pride Farms. Because of this, our new Conservation Managers are able to work more efficiently on the certification program.
Last year it was about not having water – this year, it’s been about having too much. And for Wisconsin dairy operators that creates a unique challenge that many non-farm consumers don’t think about – until there’s a problem. What do you do when your manure storage facility is full – and your fields are too waterlogged to land spread? You call a professional.

Dana Cook, operator of Cook’s Countryside Trucking in North Freedom, is one of those professionals. Wisconsin has its Professional Nutrient Applicators Association to call on when manure needs to move somewhere fast. Although they’re based in Sauk County – Cook says his crews having been covering Wisconsin, northern Illinois, northeast Iowa and southeast Minnesota helping dairy operations come up with alternative plans to their existing manure management strategies.

Cook says the association started in 2001 in response to increased regulations and a genuine desire by the dairy industry to get better organized on manure management. There’s been a substantial investment in the professional nutrient handling business too. Cook’s operation, for example, has invested heavily in large equipment that can handle volume, quickly.

But how do they do their job when fields are waterlogged? Cook says they’re in constant contact with DNR officials statewide, updating them on conditions, and seeking assistance when alternative facilities or land are needed. “This year the DNR has been super to work with,” Cook tells me, “They’ve helped us find lagoon space at other facilities and they’ve even found some land that was still suitable for spreading.” Recognizing that big equipment on rural roads can cause damage – Cook and other applicators work with communities to try and create one way routes that allow them to drive down the center on roads and move manure quickly to fields with minimum damage to roadside shoulders.

Breaking Ground for Dane County’s Second Community Manure Digester

On May 29th, through the dedication of our region’s farmers, County Executive Joe Parisi, and many others from the county and the private sector (shown below), Dane County broke ground on its second manure digester. The digester, which will take in millions of gallons of raw manure, strip out the phosphorus, and produce energy; is located on the Ziegler Dairy farm west of Middleton and will receive manure from area farms including Ziegler’s, Blue Star Dairy and the Hensen Brothers Farm. Making a significant impact, this single digester will reduce 1,540 lbs of phosphorus per year. At 500 lbs of algae created by 1 pound of phosphorus, that’s 770,000 lbs of algae eliminated!

“We are extremely excited to get the second community manure digester underway,” said Don Heilman, co-founder of Clean Lakes Alliance and Yahara Pride Farms. “As both urban population and agriculture continue to expand, we must innovate and implement new technologies that will sustain this growth. Providing an effective alternative for manure management while creating green energy is a win-win for our community.”
If you are interested in getting involved in our certification program, schedule a walk-through of your land with Joe Connors today. All walk-throughs can be set-up by contacting Joe by phone at 608-444-4702 or by email at jconnors@mhtc.net.

All producers that go through the certification program will automatically become a member of Yahara Pride Farms and will have access to the following benefits:

- Discounted products & services
- Opportunity to test new technologies
- Exclusive events and educational seminars
- Newsletters
- Signage
- Pride & recognition in preserving farm heritage and cleaning up the Yahara watershed

Upcoming Events

Dane County Fair
   Dates: Wednesday, July 17 - Sunday, July 21, 2013
   Location: Alliant Energy Center - Madison, WI

Field Day at UW Arlington Farm hosted by Wisconsin Corn Growers Association
   Date: Monday, August 5th from 8:30am-3:00 pm
   Location: UW Arlington Farm
   What: Field demonstrations on nitrogen sensing technology, nitrification inhibitors, nitrogen management, cover crops, no-till farming
   Registration required! For more information or to register visit http://wicorn.ncgapremium.com

To become a member or to find more information about our organization:
www.yaharapridefarms.org
608-255-6329

If you are interested in Yahara Pride Farms apparel please visit: ces.landsend.com/CleanLakes

To get a Yahara Pride Farms member sign (shown right at Endres Berryridge Farms) after completing the certification program, please contact us at 608-255-6329.