

Rosendale Dairy/DNR Informational Session
Discussions with Rosendale Dairy Representatives and DNR Staff;
Question & Answer Session
Attendees: Jim Hebbe, Todd Morris, and Nancy Hill (JACLUM volunteer)
Royal Ridges, Ripon WI
January 22, 2009
Also incorporated is discussion from a JACLUM meeting January 17, 2009
Attendees: Charlie Marks, Jerry Specht, Jim Hebbe, Todd Morris, and
Nancy Hill (JACLUM volunteer)
[Comments by Nancy Hill]

Engineer of Rosendale Dairy:

The engineer reported that extensive testing was done before the facility was built in order to comply with DNR regulations. Two hundred test pits were dug to determine the separation of the aquifer and groundwater, and where the bedrock lies before construction of the facility. The separation between groundwater bedrock must be at least 24 inches. *[This is somewhat similar to a "perk test" required before construction of residential onsite septic systems to determine of groundwater levels at different times of the year.]*

Operations Manager of Rosendale Dairy and DNR staff:

The Rosendale Dairy is designed to store 9 months of liquid manure. Spreading of manure from the Rosendale Dairy will follow the same rules as small farms, but because their storage facilities are large, manure will not be spread during prohibited times. *[Refer to information below.]* Manure from this large dairy is injected into the soil and kept track of by use of a flow meter. The manure will be disked into the soil, which usually reduces odors. *[Some small farms also inject manure.]*

Spreading at this large facility will be recorded, field by field, and reports sent to the DNR. The dairy's agronomist will sample the manure itself that is to be spread on the fields, the soil of the field before manure spreading begins, and the soil of a field when it has reportedly reached its maximum P level. These reports will then become an annual report. Annual reports will be submitted to the DNR every 4 years. DNR reviews these reports, looking for trends the spreading levels that indicate non-compliance of regulations. DNR staff does not have sufficient staff to do the testing itself. However, if the DNR determines inconsistencies in properly reporting the required information, or chronic non-compliance, the DNR would heavily fine the operation.

[Smaller facilities, even those with Nutrient Management Plans, are not required to submit similar reports. In addition, smaller farms ordinarily have smaller manure storage facilities and may resort to spreading during times when regulations prohibit it. This prohibition period is generally when the ground is snow-covered or frozen and during February and March. Small farm spreading is not completely or, in some cases, poorly monitored.]

According to the Rosendale Operations Manager, the facility has about 700+ cows now. The cows are kept in groups of 250 in a free-stall arrangement (cows have individual stalls but are free to walk around to mix with the other

cows within its 250 group. Stalls, designed for Holsteins, have sand bedding. A veterinarian is on staff; a cow showing signs of illness is moved to quarantine. Animals are milked 24 hours a day in groups of 250 (same time each day for each group of 250). Lights are on in the facility 24 hours per day to increase milk production. The life of a cow of the facility is about 5 to 6 years. *[Jim Hebbe told me that on smaller dairy farms, animals are usually less productive and not "sent to town" until they are 7 or 8 years old.]*
Right now, 70 people are employed at the dairy.
The dairy currently owns about 1800 acres and rents about 4000 acres (from 2 owners).
These are long-term leases.

Question and Answer Period

Why was the facility allowed to be built prior to the dairy submitted all DNR required permits?

A facility can be built as long as it is a DNR and other state regulatory agencies "reviewable" project. *[I think that it similar to approval of a preliminary plat for a subdivision development. If the final plat doesn't meet required standards, the developer assumes responsibility for infractions and corrections.]*

What about wetlands that are currently being farmed?

Wetlands have setbacks and other constraints on their uses. Sometimes a wetland has been filled and been farmed; this is not usually allowed. Some wetland fields are considered converted wetlands (CWs); they have different levels of water below the surface at different times of the year. During some parts of the year, farming is allowed.

What about air emissions from the increased traffic due to the dairy's trucks that carry manure?

Air emissions are not regulated. Neither the DNR nor State regulates air emissions. This is a Federal issue.

What about other Ostrum operations (Ostrum is the owner of the Rosendale Dairy)?

Other Ostrum operations have had few violations and those were corrected immediately.

The Rosendale Dairy will have a deep well. How will this groundwater, drinking water, local wells?

Don't expect changes in local wells. The dairy's well goes much deeper into the aquifer. It will pump about 50 million gallons annually. An aquifer, of course, is not sustainable. Some golf operations pump more water out an aquifer than this dairy will. One also needs to look at all other pumping, too.

In addition, the dairy's well is below sandstone, which contains arsenic. This arsenic should not affect local wells. The DNR suggests testing the water from one's well now, as a baseline, and annually from now on. This will reveal any trends that may emerge that negatively impact one's well.

Will more bacteria be spread because of this operation?

Best Management Practices, such as many other farms employ, will attenuate contaminants. This will also be checked to look for changes in the trends of contaminates.

Is there no monitoring around the facility?

Monitoring is not now required. Monitoring is still in being developed. The local government can be used to address this.

Is there a 5 or 10 mile radius set for spreading?

No; that is only a rule of thumb. The dairy's Nutrient Management Plan determines where they can spread.

What is done if something like a fish kill happens?

The DNR will take immediate action.

What about tiled fields?

Determination of which fields are tiled is still going on.

The Rosendale Operations Manager has invited Hill and anyone who wants to, to visit the dairy at any time.

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It appears that the Wisconsin DNR has the environmental aspects of the Rosendale Dairy proposal well under control. Moreover, the proponents and opponents of the proposed Rosendale Dairy are both well represented as evidenced by the attendance at the January 22nd DNR information session. Consequently, JACLUM has decided not to take a position either in favor of or against this project. However, JACLUM will continue to actively monitor the operations of the Rosendale Dairy to assure that they operate in full compliance with the environmental protection requirements imposed by the DNR and to which the operators have agreed, and to assure that their operations have no adverse impact on Big Green Lake and the Green Lake watershed.

-Steve Wood, JACLUM Chair and GLA board member