

# OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT IN RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP

## Yahara Pride Farms Inc. Brooklyn, Wisconsin



### Self-organized conservation group yields strong results

As demands for expanded environmental regulations began to rise in south-central Wisconsin, local dairies looked for opportunities to include farmers' voices and expertise in the discussion. Farmers were eager to use their comprehensive knowledge of the land to proactively support community and environmental health, along with fiscal sustainability for their farms.

The farmer-led Yahara Pride Farms conservation board was established in 2011 in partnership with the Clean Lakes Alliance. Founders included dairy farmers, agronomists and businessmen who shared a vision of creating a self-regulated, self-recognized and self-incentivized organization to improve the land and waterways of Dane County, Wisconsin. The group has successfully become an instrument for educating, funding and implementing best agricultural management practices in the Yahara Watershed.

The key elements of Yahara Pride Farms' model are increasing conservation practices and preserving water quality through effective manure management practices. A certification program recognizes individual farms for their nutrient management successes, and educational events help area farmers understand best practices for preserving soil and water quality.

One of the most innovative solutions implemented by Yahara Pride Farms is a cost-sharing program that gives farmers the opportunity to test innovative technologies with minimum risk. To make these and other activities possible, Yahara Pride Farms board members have secured support from area corporations, businesses, foundations and other agricultural organizations. Support includes grants, event sponsorships, in-kind donations, and discounted products and services for participating farmers.

Yahara Pride Farms is a clear example of how proactive, collaborative approaches by dairy farmers pay off for everyone involved. This model has the potential to make a difference across the country as other areas look to replicate its success.

**This innovative water-quality protection partnership continues to grow rapidly, and its success has caught the attention of groups outside of the Yahara Watershed.**

- More than 45 farms participated in the cost-share program in 2015.
- In 2014, 4,732 acres of cover crops were planted in the Yahara Watershed, keeping 629 pounds of phosphorus out of area waterways.
- Yahara Pride Farms has captured the attention of both the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and Natural Resources Conservation Service with its certification program, and is working on ways the agencies can support participating farmers.