

Kewaunee Farmers: Clean water, health community are shared goals

Posted on Tuesday, Nov 28, 2017

>> WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)

CASCO, Wis. (Nov. 28, 2017) — Nearly 100 farmers and others connected to the Kewaunee County dairy community gathered this morning in a room overlooking a rotary milking parlor in a show of unity in their commitment to agriculture, the environment and the broader community.

“What many don’t understand is that we are all on the same side — to make our community better and to protect our water,” dairy farmer Lee Kinnard, who hosted the others and journalists for a press conference at Kinnard Farms, said prior to the conference. “We believe agriculture, a healthy environment and a thriving community can co-exist.”

“For our part, farmers have been entrusted with this responsibility for generations and we are asking for the community’s continued support and trust,” Kinnard said. The gathering was held in advance of a public meeting scheduled for later in the day at which the state Department of Natural Resources was to collect comments about the water discharge permits for five large farms in the area. Farmers have come under scrutiny because of water quality issues.

Among many special regulations for larger farms is the requirement that they follow nutrient management plans, which detail how much manure to apply and where to apply it as farmers use the organic fertilizer to grow crops to feed their cows. The precise plans help farmers avoid sensitive areas so the nutrients stay in the soil.

Nathan Nysse, an agronomist and owner of Tilth Agronomy, works with farmers in the county.

“We have very progressive farmers in this area because they use science in

farming,” Nysse said. “Farmers are innovators by nature and those I work with on a daily basis are always asking how they can improve. And they are willing to try something new — that is key.”

Continuous improvement is at the heart of a farmer-led environmental stewardship group in Kewaunee County called Peninsula Pride Farms, said Don Niles, a local dairy farmer and veterinarian who serves as president of the organization.

When the group was voluntarily formed in spring 2016, the farming community made a commitment to taking ownership of its role in protecting water quality, Niles said.

In addition to farmers, Peninsula Pride Farms has business members and partnerships with The Nature Conservancy, local health systems, county, state and federal agencies, and others.

“We all recognize that clean, safe water is a community issue,” Niles said, “and we all have the same goal.”