

## THE MANAGER

### ENHANCED MANAGEMENT

By Julie Berry

# Farm uses grants to construct manure storage

A concrete drive-in manure storage was constructed at the 270 milking-cow Davis Valley Farm LLC, Eagle, NY with a convergence of funding from the Dairy Acceleration Program (DAP), Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) through USDA-NRCS, and NYS Agricultural Nonpoint Source Program funds through their local Soil and Water Conservation District.

The farm was purchased in 1979 by James. Jr. Davis and his wife Cynthia. Son James Davis III and his wife Amanda are also now partners. The farm family has applied for grant funding over many consecutive years, and put in place zone tillage, buffer strips and other conservation practices that gained points in the application process. In 2016 everything aligned. In July 2016 they broke ground and completed their project in November. They are now entering their first spring with manure storage of this capacity.

“They have utilized the resources of DAP for engineering a new waste storage and transfer system. Harvest NY helped formulate ideas prior to the engineering phase and EQIP and NYS Agricultural Nonpoint funds were used for the build. They have also completed a business plan and are looking to update it to look toward expansion in the coming year. They are a farm that does an excellent job with a number of things,” says Joan Petzen, Acting Executive Director, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Wyoming County.

The farm family previously cut hay in 40-acre batches throughout the summer to coordinate with manure application. Now they can time spreading around weather conditions and concentrate on spreading when growing plants need the nutrients. The family is also focused on improving neighbor relations by not being forced to apply manure during unfavorable conditions for odor. “We used to spread every week. We tried to spread twice a week as we never wanted to get caught with a break down. This allows us to store and utilize nutrients when and where we should be putting them down and to avoid winter spreading. We’ve been trying to figure out ways to fund this on our own. It’s hard to make this kind of investment, but as a whole it makes our farm more valuable. Now our challenge is getting all of the manure out,” says Davis III.

The family initially received DAP funding for financial planning and evaluated expanding the farm and adding robotic milking machines. DAP is an initiative of Governor Cuomo in partnership with the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets and the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation designed to enhance profitability of NY dairy farms while maintaining a commitment to environmentally responsible dairy farming. After analysis, the family decided to hold off because of low milk prices. “We’ve always done this in-house because we’re good with numbers. DAP exposed me

**Careful planning and implementation of conservation practices positions farm for the future.**

to the financial advisor and now I see and understand the benefits. It allowed us to project our revenues. Expansion with the current milk prices is hard. We want to do a project once and do it right,” says Davis III. The farm family is planning to go through the financial analysis process again, to re-evaluate robots and their options.

They also used DAP funding for engineering and environmental structure design for the manure storage. “DAP covered a big share of the

engineering,” says Davis III. DAP also funds a portion of the design of a combination of practices, and they added a concrete apron in front of the storage to collect any manure that may drop while loading tankers. The Davis family had done pre-construction planning, so prior to the grant awards they knew the best site on the farm. Tim Terry, Regional Farm Strategic Planning Specialist, Harvest NY Team, had surveyed the site, located underground lines, and provided the engineer with a scaled plan. “It expedited the whole project and is helpful to identify actual costs,” says Terry. “We proactively pre-plan.”

Having that level of planning present in an application likely contributed to their success, says Petzen. On-farm projects to address water quality concerns can be proposed for cost-share funding from the NYS Agricultural Nonpoint Source Program through Soil and Water Conservation Districts during annual funding rounds. The Program, which has run annually since 1994, is competitive and oversubscribed, often with around \$40 million in applications submitted and \$13 to \$15 million available to fund the highest ranking projects for water quality, says Greg Albrecht, CNMP Specialist/AEM Program Coordinator with the NYS Dept. of Ag & Markets. For more information on funding opportunities, contact your local District office, USDA-NRCS office, and Cornell Cooperative Extension office for their respective programs. DAP is online at: <https://prodairy.cals.cornell.edu/dairy-acceleration>. □

Julie Berry ([jrb7@cornell.edu](mailto:jrb7@cornell.edu)) is PRO-DAIRY's editor.

