

# Program recognizes two local farms for cropping aspects

## IMPLEMENTING POLLUTION PREVENTION PRACTICES

July 26, 2012 By Nancy Hastings

JONESVILLE — The Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP) is recognizing two area farms for implementing appropriate pollution prevention practices.

The two farms recognized are Pleasant View Dairy owned by the Bruce and Jennifer Lewis family and Welden Farms, owned by the Welden family where Andy Welden and his sons Scott and Stuart are owners and operators.

The farms join a growing list of Michigan producers who voluntarily open their doors, inviting the MAEAP program to review and inspect their farm facilities, equipment, farming practices, management plans and written records. Technical assistance was provided by MAEAP Technician Shelby Bollwahn of the local Conservation District.

Bollwahn said the voluntary program is designed to reduce farmers' legal and environmental risks through a three-phase process including education, farmspecific risk assessment and on-farm verification that ensures the farmer has implemented environmentally sound practices.

The program's three systems — farmstead, cropping and livestock — each examine different aspects of the farm. After becoming MAEAP verified, a farm can display a sign signifying that MAEAP partners recognize the farm is environmentally assured.

"It's been a joy to work with both families and to recognize the cropping system practices they have employed," Bollwahn said. For the Lewis family, the process of verification began in January and ended May 21, but has been something the Lewises have wished to pursue for several years.

Bruce Lewis said the farm was started by his grandparents in 1941 and in 1957, his father, Roger, took over. It was in 1995 that Bruce and Jennifer began running the dairy farm and for three years, they've had assistance from their son, Adam, after his graduation from Michigan State.

Adam Lewis said he looks forward to the day when the family farm will transition to him. He shares the family's pride in having the farm become MAEAP verified.

"It's awesome," he said. "It shows people we care and are trying the best we can."

Jennifer Lewis outlined some of the environmentally sound practices they have instituted to earn the certification, including no till plantings and manure recycling.

Bruce Lewis said the process of verification can take a fair amount of time, but he's pleased with the outcome.

"Shelby worked hard at it and got it through for us," he said.

The farm will host an upcoming Field Day Aug 1-2, where MAEAP will have a booth set up to offer phase one credit for farmers seeking verification. The Lewises emphasize that people don't have to come both days, that much of what's covered is duplicated the next day.

The second farm verified, Welden Farms at 1591 E. Hastings Lake Road, has been in operation since 1892 and is celebrating 120 years of crop production in Hillsdale County.

Welden Farms raises field corn, soybeans and occasionally some winter wheat, but no livestock. Crops are contracted and sold to nearby grain buyers. All the crops grown by Welden Farms are used for animal feed, producing fuel, exports and processed goods.

To be MAEAP verified, Welden Farms demonstrated and provided written records that document Welden's good farm management practices, equipment and facilities.

"It is the farmer's individual and social responsibility to conduct business in a way that cares for and protects our natural resources, and the environment," Scott Welden said.

Stewardship of the land and natural resources is something Scott Welden said he and his siblings learned from their father.

"You couldn't ask for a better teacher," Welden said. "Credit is owed to my father for where the family farm is today. My dad always enjoys the outdoors and everything the planet offers. Farming allows people to feel connected to the planet."

Members of Welden Farms are encouraging other farmers to become MAEAP verified by attending the upcoming Field Day.

"My family and I enjoy working with Shelby Bollwahn," Welden said. "Shelby has a willingness to work with farmers and does a good job communicating. It's possible for other farmers to be MAEAP verified."

Below, the Welden family celebrates their verification with the new signage at the family farm on Cranberry Lake Road. From left are Stuart, Scott and Andy Welden with Stuart's son, Connor, standing on the tractor's ledge above. NANCY HASTINGS PHOTOS

