DBA along with three environmental groups have announced a policy partnership unique to Wisconsin that will focus on water quality and support for farmers. The partnership — with Clean Wisconsin, The Nature Conservancy in Wisconsin, and Wisconsin Land and Water Conservation Association (WI Land+Water) — was announced last month at a virtual press conference.

“We all value clean water and we all want economically and environmentally resilient farms. Our groups recognize that caring for both is a shared responsibility,” DBA President Tom Crave said. “Farmers are problem-solvers, and every day we are seeing more and more innovative conservation practices that protect and improve water quality around the state. Moving forward together with others who share this commitment will accelerate progress.”

(continued on page 2)
The groups outlined four principles that will guide and inform their efforts to push for robust policy changes, including increasing well testing and well replacement funding, improving the CAFO program and bolstering current conservation efforts. The groups hope to be a catalyst for critically needed policies.

“The challenges facing our drinking water and farming community demand innovative solutions. While not always on the same side of policy debates, our groups have had a long history of advocating for these issues,” Mark Redsten, president and CEO of Clean Wisconsin, said. “We’re working together because it’s time we rethink how we protect our water while supporting our farmers.”

Elizabeth Koehler, director of The Nature Conservancy in Wisconsin, said this initiative is urgent.

“As the world’s population increases, finding ways to produce more food while protecting clean water will only become more challenging,” Koehler said. “Given Wisconsin’s prominent role in agriculture, our state will be an important part of the solution, and collaboration across the public, private and non-profit sectors will be critical.”

For too long, agricultural and environmental issues have been addressed as standalone issues, and policy disagreements have often led to conflicts and inaction on these issues, the groups said. As partners, they hope to change how the state approaches drinking water protection and farmer support.

“We can all agree that the status quo isn’t working for water in Wisconsin, nor agriculture,” said Matt Krueger, executive director of WI Land+Water. “Now, more than ever, there is real opportunity — and need — to develop a sustainable vision for both, going forward.”

Farmers are problem-solvers, and every day we are seeing more and more innovative conservation practices that protect and improve water quality around the state. Moving forward together with others who share this commitment will accelerate progress.

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**Policy Radar**

**Biennial state budget**

Wisconsin government operates on a two-year budget cycle. The incoming Legislature, along with Gov. Evers, will begin work on the 2021-22 budget to set the state’s priorities for spending on operations, services and projects. While the legislative calendar has not yet been set, we have a good idea what the first half of 2021 will look like to build the budget.

- Jan. 4: Legislators sworn in, 2021-22 legislative session convenes
- Jan. 12: Gov. Evers delivers annual State of State Address (7 p.m.)
- Feb. 16: Gov. Evers delivers Biennial Budget Address (7 p.m.)
- *March/April: Joint Finance Committee hearings on biennial budget
- *May/June: Joint Finance Committee and legislative chambers debate budget
- June 30: 2020 fiscal year ends
- July 1: 2021 fiscal year begins
- *Mid-July 2021: Evers signs 2021-23 biennial budget

*estimate based on previous budget cycles

**Legislative leadership**

Republicans picked up two seats in the Senate and will have new leadership for the first time in 12 years. Devin LeMahieu, R-Oostburg, won election as majority leader and Chris Kapenga, R-Delafield, is the new Senate president. Democrats elected Janet Bewley, D-Mason, to continue as Senate minority leader.

Leadership in the Assembly remains largely unchanged with Assembly Speaker Robin Vos, R-Rochester, and Majority Leader Jim Steineke, R-Kaukauna, holding their seats. Gordon Hintz, D-Oshkosh, was elected to return for another session as Assembly minority leader.
From Leadership

**After historic year, we look to the future**

By Tom Crave,
Past president

At this time of year, when we crawl into the heart of winter, it is good to look back to where we have been and then look forward to where we are going.

I am calling 2020 a historic year, although you might use a different word.

In January, before the pandemic struck, DBA was able to hold Dairy Day at the Capitol. Dozens of farmers and corporate members heard about key state issues from the Department of Natural Resources and legislative leaders and then visited the offices of more than 40 lawmakers to share views on dairy issues. We stressed the importance of driver’s permits for non-citizens, funding for rural roads and improving the CAFO program.

Everything stopped with COVID, and state lawmakers went home. The government affairs team continued to engage with the leadership, focusing attention on economic relief for farmers.

Throughout the late spring and summer, the staff learned the ins and outs of the Paycheck Protection Program and the CARES Act so we could keep members informed and assist as needed. I hope many of our farm families were able to benefit from the government help.

Of course, there was also an election. The DBA board and government affairs team selected dozens of state candidates to endorse and financially support. Nearly all of those candidates won, so the dairy community should see positive outcomes.

Enough about the past, it is time to look to the future. DBA’s Dairy Strong conference is Jan. 19-21. The virtual event will be loaded with great speakers and discussions about challenges and opportunities. (Read more at dairystrong.org/conference.)

On the policy side, we will push many of the items that stalled last session like the CAFO program and a dairy export initiative and pursue new proposals like funding for clean water efforts.

DBA is especially excited about a new joint initiative with The Nature Conservancy, Clean Wisconsin and the Wisconsin Land and Water Conservation Association focused on improving water quality while supporting farmers. The groups have been discussing this approach for two years.

Gov. Evers’ focus on clean water and the creation of a water quality task force by Assembly Speaker Robin Vos gave us even more reason to get started.

When the groups began talking, we quickly found that although we have butted heads on water policy, the organizations have a lot in common. We all want clean water and realize the importance of agriculture in Wisconsin.

The organizations created a set of policy principles for decision-makers to follow. By being proactive and working collaboratively, we can help farmers gain more ground on conservation, get support and drive solutions rather than wait for unhelpful regulations.

I don’t have a crystal ball so I can’t say exactly what will come in 2021. But I can tell you DBA will work as hard as possible to help members succeed.

I would like to congratulate all of our farm families and supportive businesses on adjusting to the challenges caused by the pandemic. It’s been extraordinary.

I wish everyone a happy and healthy New Year.

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**Penterman elected as DBA president**

Amy Penterman, a crop insurance agent and dairy farmer in Thorp, was elected Jan. 6 as the next president of DBA. The vote happened during DBA’s annual meeting.

Penterman, who was first elected to the board of directors in 2017, farms with her husband, Sander, at Dutch Dairy. She has been part of the farm since 2007, focusing on daily management and human resources while continuing her 20-plus-year career in crop insurance. She also worked in farm lending for 15 years.

The Pentermans milk 850 cows, farm 1,275 acres and employ 12 full-time and two part-time employees. They focus on soil health and water quality by planting cover crops, using manure injection when feasible and recycling water.

Penterman was elected DBA’s vice president in 2019 and previously served as secretary.

She was chosen in 2018 by then-Gov. Scott Walker to serve on the Wisconsin Dairy Task Force 2.0. The task force was a joint effort by the state Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection and the University of Wisconsin System to position the dairy community for long-term success. The task force developed 51 recommendations in a broad range of areas.
DBA’s annual Dairy Strong conference is shaping up to be an exciting mix of speakers, panel discussions, breakout sessions and political insights focused on empowering the dairy community to move forward.

The virtual conference Jan. 19-21 will have themed days — Forward & Focused, Sustainability & Stewardship and Policy & Purpose.

“We are excited to provide a rich experience for the people who contribute so much to an industry that is integral to the economy, communities and culture of our dairy states, and to the nation and world through the production of wholesome, affordable food,” DBA Executive Director Tim Trotter said.

Peter Sheahan and Matt Lewis headline the speaker lineup. Gov. Tony Evers will speak as well. Sheahan is a best-selling author and world-renowned speaker on exploiting business trends and new market opportunities. He is also the founder and CEO of Karrikins Group, which is a global growth-oriented consulting firm. Lewis is a senior columnist for the Daily Beast, political commentator for CNN and author of “Too Dumb to Fail.”

Ray Starling and Michael Torrey will lead a political insight panel discussion. Starling has worked in the Supreme Court, White House and for the Department of Agriculture. Torrey is DBA’s lobbying partner in Washington, D.C., helping to advocate at the federal level for sensible dairy policy. He has worked on Capitol Hill and at USDA and also has been involved in a previous presidential transition. With the election in the rearview mirror, they will explore the transition process, changes at USDA and in Congress, and what the next four years could hold for policymakers and farmers alike.

In breakout sessions, attendees will have the opportunity to learn about innovation through retail and food services, turning a profit on feed centers, working with new and current employees, being prepared for animal activists, environmental and economic sustainability, and more.

DBA will wrap up the conference with the announcement of its Advocate of the Year. The award is given to an outstanding farmer member who is committed to sharing and promoting dairy’s message, is involved in organizations, engages with customers, develops opportunities with neighbors and is committed to standing up for sensible policy.

The conference is supported by many dedicated and valued sponsors.

“We are excited to provide a rich experience for the people who contribute so much to an industry that is integral to the economy, communities and culture of our dairy states, and to the nation and world.”

Thankful to all of our sponsors for their continued support,” Director of Corporate Relations Nicole Barlass said.

“DBA prides itself on providing our Dairy Strong attendees with exciting and forward-thinking content that challenges our farmers and business partners when thinking about the future of their businesses. The conference is a key fundraiser for DBA, helping the association to do all that we do to protect and promote Wisconsin dairy farms,” Barlass said.

Sponsorships are available by contacting Barlass at nbarlass@dairyforward.com or Rebekah Morrow at rmorrow@dairyforward.com.

Register at dairystrong.com/registration.

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**Feature Story**

**Dairy Strong to highlight opportunity, sustainability, policy**

By Rebekah Morrow, events and executive administrator

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“Even though we are challenged with the impact of the pandemic, we are extremely thankful to all of our sponsors for their continued support,” Director of Corporate Relations Nicole Barlass said.

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January 2021 | Dairy Forward 5
The increasing use of non-traditional farming practices in Lafayette County is making important progress toward reducing the potential for harmful runoff into streams and lakes, a new analysis shows.

Using data about farming practices among members of the Lafayette Ag Stewardship Alliance (LASA), the analysis calculated an estimate of the potential impact of three innovative practices — cover crops, strip-tillage and no-tillage — compared to more conventional methods typical to that area.

The findings show that the livestock and crop farmers using strip-tillage and no-tillage practices as compared to conventional practices potentially reduce phosphorus runoff from farm fields by 53 percent and soil erosion by 59 percent.

Phosphorus that reaches a stream or lake can cause algae to grow and degrade waterways. For every pound of phosphorus that reaches a waterway, it feeds almost 500 pounds of algae, degrading water quality.

“We have many dedicated farmers in this area who work hard to safeguard our water and soil, so to see these sorts of results is rewarding,” DBA member Jim Winn, a dairy farmer who leads LASA, said. “We push ourselves to get better every day at protecting the environment. Measuring progress is critical.”

The three-year-old nonprofit farmer-led watershed conservation group in southwestern Wisconsin has grown to 27 members who represent 47,000 acres and 23,000 dairy animals, beef cattle and pigs. The alliance closely supported by DBA collaborates with university researchers, environmental groups and community leaders. They hold field days to demonstrate various practices and they participate in scientific studies, notably contributing thousands of dollars to an ongoing groundwater study.

The Nature Conservancy, a key supporter of LASA, helped fund the phosphorus and soil loss analysis, which is based on surveys from the farms.

“We’re excited to work with these innovative LASA farmer members who are not only making changes in how they farm and manage their soil but sharing their data so we can better measure outcomes,” said Steve Richter, director of agriculture strategies for The Nature Conservancy.

“There is a lot of interest among farmers in practices that improve soil health and increase productivity, and LASA farmers are making these practices more accessible to others by sharing lessons learned.”

In addition to the cover crops, strip-tillage and no-tillage, LASA members are regularly practicing conservation techniques like basic soil sampling, plant tissue sampling, nitrogen stabilization, nutrient management plans and planting harvestable buffer strips. They are also figuring out how to make these practices financially sustainable.

“Trial and error are part of this, but we keep moving forward,” Winn said. “We recognize we can do better, we can learn from one another and we can stand out as community leaders on environmental sustainability.”

CONSERVATION PRACTICES

LASA farmers have made noticeable changes to their practices. In 2019:

- 23,500 acres of tillage practices
- 22,300 acres with nutrient management
- 5,305 acres of cover crops
- 4,000 acres of low-disturbance manure injection
DBA staff empowers members to lead

By Dale Beaty, director of member relations

As the director of DBA member relations, I lead our member services representative (MSR) team. Our team consists of: Paul Stoffel, Lauren Laubscher, Peter Scharpe and me. The MSR team serves as the direct contact resource for our dairy farmer and milk processors. We deliver valuable services and keep you updated on the issues impacting your business. In return, we relay your voice back to our leaders.

DBA’s mission is to empower our members to lead America’s Dairyland forward by connecting with our communities and policymakers through advocacy, collaboration and continuous improvement. Our core values are engaged members, organizational agility, transparency and responsiveness, diverse relationships built on trust, and commitment to our communities. The entire DBA staff works collaboratively to provide you relevant and valuable member services. DBA is a good investment for you because we offer information, education, public relations, representation and networking opportunities.

Through newsletters (including a Spanish version), emails, social media and our Dairy Steam podcast, we provides you with technical, operational, legal and legislative news to keep you on top of critical issues.

DBA provides knowledge, insight and resources for local, state and federal regulatory issues. We engage in learning conversations with customers, media and legislators to help them understand the economic value dairy brings to our local communities and state. DBA’s lobbyists are proactively engaged with lawmakers to ensure dairy’s future.

During a recent training session, DBA partnered with STgenetics to offer ST Cow Academy – an all-inclusive event where herd professionals and reproduction managers came together to learn, network and share ideas. Participants gained insight on applying data from farm management software reports to reproduction protocols, basic herd management and A.I. training. Participants returned to their dairy farms with knowledge they can apply to every-day on-farm routines. We hope to be able to team up with other partners this year to provide similar training.

If you have ideas or suggestions on how we might better meet your needs, please talk to your member services representative, or let me know (dbeaty@dairyforward.com).

The entire DBA staff works collaboratively to provide you relevant and valuable member services.

Prevent roof collapse from snow

From Hastings Mutual

Significant snow accumulation can damage or even destroy a roof. Be prepared before a storm strikes.

Wood structures will show stress before they fail.

Listen or look for the following signs:
• Creaking or moaning in the building
• Bowing of truss bottom chords or web members
• Bowing of rafters or purlins
• Bowing of headers or columns

Be especially careful in and around pre-engineered metal structures, which might fail without any indication of stress.

If you hear or see any warning signs, remove people, animals and equipment from the building as soon as possible.

Clear off the snow safely and check the structure to make sure it is fit for use.

To safely remove snow:
1. Create “zones” on the roof so snow can be removed one zone at a time.
2. Remove snow equally from both sides of the building, beginning at the eaves and working toward the peak until all the snow is removed.
3. As snow is removed from the roof, be sure to clear snow from the barn side walls to prevent pressure on the walls.
4. To be sure you are clearing the snow safely, use appropriate tools and consult a qualified professional.
DBA realizes that when times are difficult, you need support the most. This past year definitely has been one of those times. Our team met the challenges head-on to make sure members could make it through the uncertainty. From extensive work on financial assistance for farmers to crucial information about employee safety, DBA delivered the kind of support you expect. Despite the obstacles, we all had to keep moving forward.

DBA has an important opportunity that we encourage you to consider — renewing your membership for the next three years at a 20 percent discount. You can lock in three years of valuable services and not be asked for an annual payment again until 2024. This opportunity is available through Feb. 1.

To sign a three-year membership, producers should contact Dale Beaty, director of member relations, at (608) 774-4723 or dbeaty@dairyforward.com. Corporate members should contact Nicole Barlass at (920) 883-0020, ext. 104, or nbarlass@dairyforward.com.