

Built on a Foundation of Innovation and Environmental Stewardship a Community Barn is Officially Open!

Submitted by Jennifer Lauri, Conservation Specialist, Luzerne Conservation District

On Saturday June 8, 2019 The Lands at Hillside Farms held an official unveiling and ribbon cutting ceremony for the new Dr. Doug Ayers Dairy Barn, a two-year project.



The community, donors, Conservation District staff, staff from The Lands at Hillside Farms and press gathered around on Saturday anticipating the tour of the new 15,000 square foot facility. Chet Mozloom, farm executive director spoke to the audience and told them their grateful story of how the new facility came about.

The original dairy barn from the 1800's sits within feet of a stream. Every storm and high-water event caused panic amongst the farm staff. The old dam immediately up stream of the barn had been failing for years and would often back up, in some instances a stream would run through the barn, manure practices and milkhouse waste management were always a concern of the staff. In addition to the water concern, the animals crossed a state road two times a day to get to pasture. Each time farm staff would carefully organize the move and stop traffic for the cows to make their way to their lush pastures.

Dr. Doug Ayers and Chet had been brainstorming how to make lives for the cows better and keep conservation in mind. The Lands at Hillside Farms has worked with the Luzerne Conservation District in the past to plant hundreds of trees along the stream on the farm. Chet mentioned that all the water on the farm is protected by vegetation and buffers. The farm has also installed a rain garden, a green parking lot to reduce the amount of impervious surface, and bird boxes all around the property to control the pests. The Lands at Hillside Farms has the best interest of the environment and the health of the cows in mind. That is clear, as they switched animal dewormers to one that was not harmful to dung beetles, they don't use herbicides or pesticides and all fence posts are locust post, not pressure treated.

Knowing the environmental threat and heard comfort the water placed on the farm Amy Brown, formerly Luzerne Conservation District approached the farm with an idea for a Growing Greener Grant. Amy showed Chet a farm in Columbia County that offered efficiency, cow comfort and was much more environmentally conscious.

After the tour of the farm Chet knew that is what their facility would look like. A 184' x 53' building with a 50' x 123' compost bed pack area, a 16' feed alley and feed table, and a 27' x 13' liquid storage tank, animal trails and access lanes funded through the Growing Greener Grant. The new facility would also be equipped with a milking parlor, holding area, utility room, two box pens and a truck bay all of which was funded through donations.

In his address to the crowd, Chet and all of the employees at Hillside voiced their sincere gratitude to the Conservation District, the donors, and all of the people in the community who have assisted them to get to this place. Chet expressed not only how happy the cows are but how the building is energy efficient and will promote cow and environmental health and best of all, the cows no longer cross the road.

The total contribution from the Luzerne Conservation District through a DEP Growing Green Grant was \$325,000.00.