

LOCAL FARM FAMILY RECEIVES RECOGNITION AND SIGN FOR AGRICULTURAL ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

Reafield Farm in the Town of Jackson recently received recognition and a sign to post at their farm as a note to passersby that they are voluntarily participating in the Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) planning process which is available through the Washington County Soil and Water Conservation District. This planning process is to help farmers identify any potential resource concerns and good management practices being applied to their farming operations. The process has helped Reafield Farm to understand how their farming practices affect the surrounding environment. The farm is a part of the highly valued Battenkill Watershed and has farmland adjacent to a Class III State Wetland. By identifying these resource concerns and developing a Nutrient Management Plan the Rea family has been able to develop plans for an improved ag waste storage system and a silage leachate collection system. These plans have enabled them to apply for an Ag Non-Point Source Grant through NYS Ag and Markets to help implement these new systems as a part of their Best Management Practices.

“By doing a Nutrient Management Plan, with help from the Washington County Soil and Water District staff, we have been able identify the fields which are nutrient rich and therefore require little or no added fertilizers; this adds up to cost savings for us and is better for the environment. We can now make more informed decisions about where and how much manure we spread to make the most efficient use of the nutrients and organic matter available in this on farm resource.” Neal also went on to state “the farm has a lot of land classified as HEL, or Highly Erodible Land.” By developing a Nutrient Management Plan for the farm it enables the Rea family to identify good crop rotations and make use of cover crops during the off seasons to help build organic matter and protect from soil loss due to wind and water erosion.

The Rea family has been working with both the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Washington County Soil and Water Conservation District for a number of years. As the family grows and looks to a future of continued farming beyond the seventh generation of Travis and Thane (Neal and Carol’s sons), they wish to remain a viable farming enterprise through sound decision making, applying Best Management Practices and creating positive environmental changes in the landscape of this farm.

The Reafield Farm has been in continuous operation by the Rea family for over two hundred years (since 1798), it is a vital part of the local agriculture economy and the family is very active in the community. Neal is Chairman of the Board of Directors of Agrimark Milk Coop. His wife Carol keeps a connection to some of the past history on the farm by raising sheep for meat and wool production. Travis has a custom manure hauling and application business, and his wife Karen is very involved the cows and loves showing at the local fairs. Thane is a Scoutmaster of the Salem Boy Scout troop. His wife Dawn works for TD Bank in Salem.

The Agriculture Environmental Management planning process will definitely help this family farm work to remain a sustainable, profitable, and environmentally conscious entity into the third century of operation and for the future generations who choose to participate in the family business of agriculture and dairy farming.

