

# CUSTOMNews

Representing Custom Farming in Wisconsin | FALL 2018



Manure application, shallow soil and depth to bedrock are at the center of new targeted standards.

## Water quality policy: Past, present and future

By John Holevoet, director of government affairs, Dairy Business Association



John Holevoet

The quality of both surface and groundwater has been top of mind for many lawmakers and regulators. Agriculture has been at the center of many discussions about water quality. Custom operators will be impacted by any regulation that comes because of water concerns. At the same time, you also have a unique and important perspective to add regarding any proposed changes.

For WCO and its membership to engage in a meaningful way on this issue, it will help to know the most recent developments in water quality policy in the state and have a sense for what else might be coming down the road in the next couple of years.

2018 saw the enactment of the state's

first targeted performance standards as part of a revision of NR 151, one of two administrative rules that make up the bulk of regulations for the state's non-point runoff program. (Non-point sources like farms are distinguished from point sources like most industrial facilities, which have a point or points from which discharges come, e.g. effluent comes out of that pipe.) These targeted performance standards require additional oversight for the application of manure on land with shallow soil on top of Silurian dolomite (a type of fractured bedrock found in counties on the eastern side of the state near Lake Michigan).

The road to these new standard's enactment was a long one. Recognizing the importance of these rules to the dairy community, Dairy Business Association was engaged in the process every step of the way. We also worked to make sure that other

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## UPCOMING DATES:

**Employee of the Year**  
Applications due Dec. 1

**Pesticide Applicator Training**  
Monday, Feb. 18  
Chula Vista Resort

**Forage Symposium**  
Feb. 18-20  
Chula Vista Resort  
Wisconsin Dells, Wis.

## CONTACT WCO:

Membership or Sponsorship:  
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# From the President's Cab

By Bryce O'Leary



As I write this column, we are putting the finishing touches on another harvest season. This year, like most, has had some challenges. Most areas of the state had too much rain and mud and then the corn died too fast. With a little patience, some innovation and

lots of determination, the jobs were finished as well as could be, given the situation.

While grain harvest and nutrient application is still in full swing, we should all take a moment to catch our breath and make notes of things that could be improved to make harvest go smoother next year. Wisconsin had a 100-year rainfall this year, so I'd like to think that we won't live to see the same field conditions, but I'm sure we will experience similar situations in the future. Next year could be dry and we will be praying for rain. That's farming!

The education committee has been hard at work putting together the program for the Symposium in February. Again this year, we will have a speaker who operates a large-scale, multi-state, multiple unit harvesting operation. Josh Parker of Parker Forage LLC will share his experience traveling with his family and crew across the country.

As you know, safety is a core pillar of WCO. To this end, we are fortunate enough to have Dr. Keith Bolsen, from the Keith Bolsen Silage Safety Foundation also speaking at Symposium. Dr. Bolsen is a professor emeritus from Kansas State University who travels the country promoting silage handling safety. For those of you who participate in the WCO Safety Certification program, this speaker will be one of your continuing education credits.

We are happy to report that PNAAW has decided to rejoin the Symposium, so there should be a larger group with even more topics of interest for our members. The trade show is always a good place to talk to company representatives about any plans you may have for new equipment.

Like last year, we are offering a public Commercial Pesticide Applicator Certification training, so if you use products that require that you be certified (like inoculants or nitrogen stabilizers) it can be taken care of at the Dells. We hope everyone has a safe rest of harvest and we look forward to seeing you in February! 🍷

-Bryce

## Issues to watch

**Elections:** Nov. 6 was the general election. WCO has not historically endorsed candidates (although we can as a 501c5 non-profit organization). Our issues are bipartisan and WCO works with all elected leaders toward solutions in the agriculture community.

**Dairy Task Force 2.0:** Governor Walker created the Wisconsin Dairy Task Force 2.0 in June as a joint effort between

DATCP and the UW System to study the Wisconsin dairy industry with the goal of making recommendations on actions needed to maintain a viable and profitable dairy industry in Wisconsin.

For more information about the task force and how to submit comments, go to [datcp.wi.gov](http://datcp.wi.gov) and type "Dairy Task Force" into the search bar. 🍷

## Forage Symposium Feb. 18-20

Watch your mail and email for registration materials for the annual Forage Symposium. Registration opens early December. **Mark your calendars for Feb. 18-20** again at the Chula Vista in Wisconsin Dells. If you need to obtain or renew your Commercial Pesticide Applicator certificate, please register for the training on Feb. 18. This event will be a WCO, MFA and PNAAW partnership. Welcome back PNAAW!

## Welcome new members!

The following list represents individuals/sponsors who joined WCO from July - November 2018

James Allicks, Allicks Family Farms  
Daniel Mueller, Mueller Farms

WCO member D&J Manthe  
Forage Services, DeForest, Wis.  
*Photo by Troy Meyer.*



## Water quality (continued from p. 1)

agricultural voices were heard during the discussion. For example, DBA pushed for the inclusion of a WCO member on the workgroup that advised DNR regarding the proposed changes.

DBA acknowledges the new standards are not perfect and are a compromise, but we worked to make them as practical as possible. We are also committed to ensuring that the new rules are implemented fairly and based on sound research.

The long-term fight over these standards will likely continue. There are environmental activists pushing to have these rules apply to farms in a much larger area. This would be a mistake because the rules were written with this one specific region in mind. Our water resource challenges are complex and often region-specific; we do not have a one-size-fits-all solution. Instead, we would be better served by working together to gather data to improve our understanding of water quality.

Dealing with water quality concerns is not just about new regulations. DBA partnered with other agricultural groups to help create a grant program for voluntary, farmer-led watershed groups. These groups give farmers the chance to learn from each other and help one another improve. Last year, funding for these groups was increased.

For DBA, we're not content to just sit on the sidelines. As part of the Dairy Strong Sustainability Alliance, we are actively supporting five of these farmer-led watershed groups and we encourage other agricultural organizations to step up to do the same. We need research and innovation to be successful and these groups help with both.

It is often forgotten that after the Clean Water Act became law in the 1970s, significant investments (many of them subsidized by the government) were necessary for industrial and municipal point sources to become compliant with new rules. Regulations alone did not carry the day. Now, attention has shifted from point sources to the role of agricultural non-point sources. However, there is no new wave of financial support to help farmers, so we need to be creative about how we can fund this work.

One opportunity to help raise private sector funds for conservation efforts is nutrient trading. Most people are familiar with the concept of carbon trading. The idea is that companies that want or need to reduce their carbon footprint, but would struggle to do so in a cost-effective manner, are able to buy carbon credits from some other entity that is well positioned to reduce its carbon emissions.

A similar market could function for phosphorus or maybe other

with a farmer-led group to make a much more significant reduction in phosphorus for a fraction of the cost? This is a win-win situation that can really help to move the needle on water quality.

Some of the legal framework to make nutrient trading effective in Wisconsin already exists. However, it is a cumbersome process that has a long way to go before it is a popular option. DBA hopes to make such trades easier and more common. This should be an approach that would enjoy bipartisan support in the coming legislative session.

The future of farmer-led watershed groups and nutrient trading might seem far removed from the work that WCO members do in the fields, but it is not. These innovations, along with other changes we are seeing because of the focus on water quality will shape what practices farmers and their custom operators will be using for years to come. 🇺🇸

“DBA acknowledges the new standards are not perfect and are a compromise, but we worked to make them as practical as possible.”

nutrients. Many Wisconsin companies and municipal wastewater treatment plants are struggling to meet new phosphorus standards. If a small municipality would have to spend \$10 million to achieve a slight reduction in phosphorus discharges from their wastewater treatment plant, why not allow that same municipality to enter into an agreement



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## Employee of the year nominations due Dec. 1; 10k video views

By WCO

Each year, WCO honors an employee of a custom farming operation who demonstrates excellence in the areas of safety, efficiency, customer service, environmental stewardship, profitability and new this year – community engagement. This award is particularly focused on acknowledging and recognizing member-employee contributions that go above and beyond.

All employees, both full and part-time, of a custom farming business are eligible for the award. The winner will receive \$750 and the nominator will receive \$250.

“We all know how hard it can be to maintain a custom farming business. We also know the value of having good help,” said Ray Liska, WCO vice president. “This year let’s go the

extra mile and thank that one special employee who stands out in the crowd”

Applications for the WCO Employee of the Year Award are currently being accepted and are due Dec. 1. New this year, anyone can nominate an employee of a WCO member business. The individual does not need to be employed by the person nominating them. The nominator also does not have to be a member of WCO.

Farmers, clients of operators and fellow operators can all make nominations.

Visit [wiscustomoperators.org](http://wiscustomoperators.org) for more information including eligibility, criteria and application.

This past February, WCO honored Steve Breher, an employee of Kraus Custom Forage Harvesting as Employee of the Year. 🍷



Ray Liska, WCO vice president, produced a video for social media to promote the Employee of the Year award. The video has been viewed more than 10,000 times.

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## Please send your photos to WCO

Photos featured in the *Custom News* are either taken by staff or submitted by members and sponsors. We are always looking for high quality images of custom farmers in action. It might look like we favor certain brands because some sponsors are really good at sending in awesome photos! So - if you don't see enough of a certain brand of equipment, YOU can change that!

Please e-mail your high-resolution images (1MB or larger) to [excedir@wiscustomoperators.org](mailto:excedir@wiscustomoperators.org) and we will be sure to feature you on our social media channels and in our publications. Thank you in advance!



### Board of Directors 2018

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**Vice President** – Ray Liska  
**Secretary** – Josh Bartholomew (corp rep.)  
**Treasurer** – Chuck Rabitz (corp. rep.)  
**North region** – Derek Ducat  
**South West region** – Bill Smith  
**Director at large** – Bill Arneson

**Honorary Representatives**  
Dr. Kevin Shinnars, UW-Madison  
Dr. Matt Digman, UW-River Falls  
Dr. Brian Luck, UW-Madison

**In 2019, WCO will elect one at-large operator director and one corporate director.**

### Board nominations

WCO is looking for board of director nominations. Elections will take place at the annual meeting on Feb 20, 2019, held in conjunction with the Forage Symposium at Chula Vista Resort in Wisconsin Dells. Directors must be members of WCO and serve three year terms and with no more than two consecutive terms.

Meetings generally coincide with association or industry events for ease:

- February** - Forage Symposium
- March** - WCO Safety Cert. event
- July** - WI Farm Tech Days
- December** - Stand alone meeting

If you are interested in running or know someone who is, contact: [execdir@wiscustomoperators.org](mailto:execdir@wiscustomoperators.org) or (608) 577-4345.

### Join a committee

Committees are open to all members. WCO is always accepting committee members. If you are looking for a small but important way to get involved, contact WCO about joining a committee. Choose from the following:

- Education/Conference*
- Media*
- Scholarship & Awards*
- Safety/Regulations*

### WCO Annual Meeting

The annual member meeting of the Wisconsin Custom Operators will be held Wednesday, Feb. 20 at 8 a.m.

The business meeting will include election of directors, committee reports and financial overview. All paid operator members may vote for directors.

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## AgrAbility of Wisconsin: Tips for a safe harvest

By Abigail Jensen, AgrAbility Outreach Specialist



Abigail Jensen

Over 4,000 farm related accidents happen in Wisconsin every year, many resulting in permanent disabilities.

Agriculture is one of the nation's most hazardous occupations. These are some staggering statistics, and that's why AgrAbility of Wisconsin is here to help. Since 1991, AgrAbility of Wisconsin has been promoting success in agriculture for farmers with limitations and disabilities.

Farming is not an easy job. Daily repetition for a lifetime of working wears on the body. Milking cows in a stanchion

barn will eventually wear out the knees, and in a parlor will wear out the shoulders. Mucking pens with a fork or shovel is hard on a sore back. Climbing in and out of tractors every day on tall steps is straining on shoulders, knees and backs. Even walking from the house to the barn several times a day can be stressful on arthritic hips and weak joints. Despite these hardships and limitations, farmers persevere.

They will continue to wake up every morning to do their chores because they are dedicated and passionate about the work they do. When a task becomes too difficult and a farmer needs assistance to continue doing the work he or she loves, AgrAbility should be the first call to make.

Fall harvest is well underway.

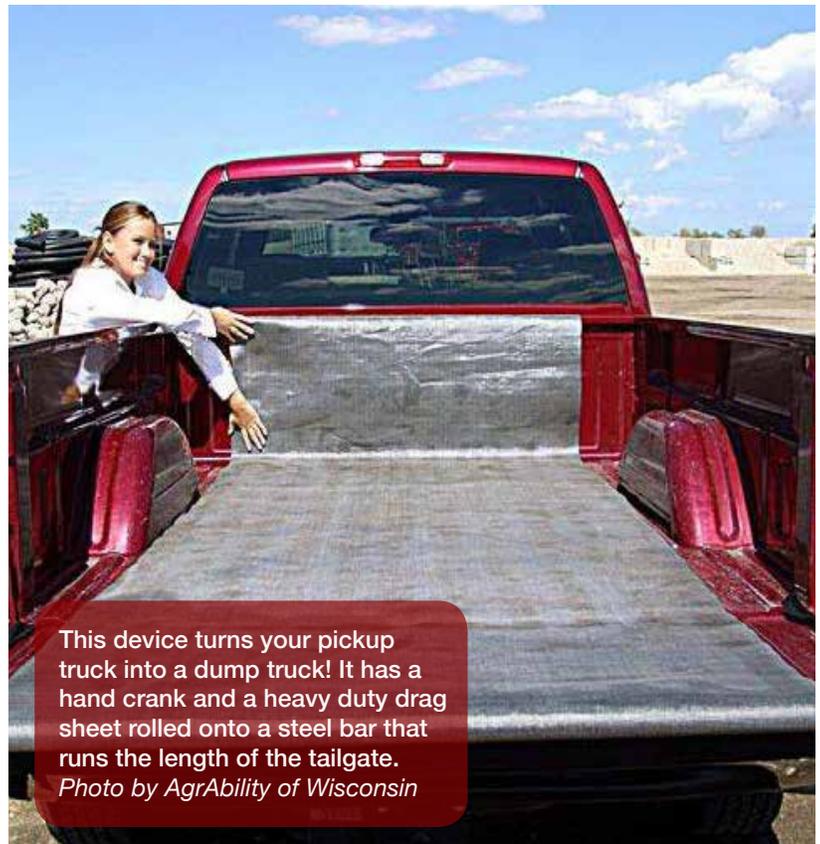
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This device turns your pickup truck into a dump truck! It has a hand crank and a heavy duty drag sheet rolled onto a steel bar that runs the length of the tailgate.

*Photo by AgrAbility of Wisconsin*

*Continued from previous page*

Grandparents, fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, cousins, uncles, and family friends are spending long days in the fields to get crops harvested. It is a time of year where families and businesses come together and work hard, despite the hour of the day, to get crops in.

With the increased tractor and field time comes some increased risks. Tractor accidents are unfortunate and often times devastating. To ensure safety through the entire harvest season, AgrAbility has compiled some helpful safety tips to get loved ones home safe at the end of a long day.

First and foremost is safety with machinery. It is crucial that all equipment has proper and functional lighting and signs for road travel, especially when driving at night. Every tractor must be equipped with a Slow Moving Vehicle sign when it is being operated on the road.

Long days in a tractor can be hard on the back from sitting for extended periods of time. Between loads, take a break to step out of the tractor and stretch the legs and back to relieve muscle tension. If it is hard to get in and out of the tractor that does not have steps, bring a short portable ladder to the field and have it set up where it is easily accessible for you. Remember that you should always have three points of contact when getting in and out of machinery to reduce the risk of falling down off the machine. For instance, use two hands gripping a solid bar and one foot on a stable step while getting down.

Remember that no passengers are allowed in a tractor without a proper buddy seat. Additional riders without proper seating pose a greater risk in an accident for the rider and the operator.

It can be difficult to find secure footing in an uneven field. For farmers with mobility limitations, it is important to be aware of your surroundings when



If you have difficulty climbing into your skid steer, an access platform may help alleviate some strain on your joints. *Photo by AgrAbility of Wisconsin*

navigating an uneven terrain, such as a corn field. Stay in the vehicle if possible and wait until even ground is available to walk outside.

Equipment is bound to get dirty. When cleaning equipment, be sure that all safety measures have been followed and accounted for. Many new tractors are equipped with technology that will stop the entire machine and all attachments when it senses the operator has left their seat. If the tractor does not have these features, simply wait until all moving parts have stopped prior to cleaning and maintaining equipment.

The most important thing to remember while harvesting is that the equipment is replaceable, but the people operating the machinery are not. Safety should always be a priority.

AgrAbility of Wisconsin has provided assistance to over 2,500 Wisconsin farmers since its beginnings in 1991. Some examples of accommodations in place at our clients' farms include; an extra step closer to the ground to make getting in and out of the tractor easier, temperature controlled cabs for individuals that need consistent climate control, and bump-and-drive gates to

eliminate the need to climb in and out of equipment. Other examples are tractor lifts, hand controls, and EZ hitches.

There are two simple qualifications to be eligible to receive AgrAbility of Wisconsin services. The first is to be involved in some facet of production agriculture. AgrAbility has assisted all types of farmers, ranging from dairy, to crops, to Christmas tree farms. The second is to be generating income from the agricultural business. AgrAbility operates in partnership with UW-Extension and Easter Seals Wisconsin to aid Wisconsin farmers.

If you are interested in AgrAbility services, please contact our office at 608-262-9336. Once you have enrolled in the program, we will direct you to an Easter Seals FARM team specialist. This individual will visit your farm to assess your situation and make recommendations that might assist your day-to-day life. Once you have decided which recommendations you would like to see in place on your farm, our team will work with you to secure funding and get the equipment on your farm. 🇺🇸

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## Membership incentive program

Don't forget - WCO has a membership incentive program! If you sign up a new member and they list your name on the paper application or online, you receive \$25 towards your 2019 membership. Sponsors can participate also. Simply list your company name on the "referred by" line and earn money towards your 2019 sponsorship.

Incentive not to exceed cost of membership or sponsorship. We already have members and sponsors taking advantage of the program. Help WCO grow our membership base!

## Welcome to WCO

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## DNR rule revisions for manure spreading took effect July 1

By Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

New rule revisions designed to reduce manure groundwater contamination, specifically in the northeast section of the state, took effect July 1.

The changes, under NR 151, relate to Silurian bedrock, which are areas where the soil depth to bedrock is shallow and the bedrock may be fractured.

“The main purpose of this targeted performance standard is to reduce the risk for contamination in groundwater from manure applications on shallow bedrock soils,” said Mary Anne Lowndes, DNR Watershed Management Section chief.

Lowndes said Silurian bedrock soils identified in the rule revisions are dolomite bedrock with a depth of 20 feet or less. The rule targets an area in the state that may include portions of Brown, Calumet, Dodge, Door, Fond du Lac, Kenosha, Kewaunee, Manitowoc, Milwaukee, Ozaukee, Racine, Sheboygan, Walworth, Washington, and

Waukesha counties.

“Within a specified area, the rule sets forth manure spreading rates and practices that vary according to the soil depth and texture,” said Lowndes. “For Silurian bedrock, the most restrictive practices apply to those limited areas with the highest risk for pathogen delivery, zero to five feet in depth, and less restrictive requirements apply in areas with five to 20 feet to bedrock.”

Lowndes added that CAFOs in the Silurian bedrock areas will be required to comply with the standards in the new rule, when it is incorporated into their WPDES permit, and a cross reference to the targeted performance standard language has also been added to NR 243, which applies to CAFOs subject to WPDES permitting. Non-permitted farms in Silurian bedrock areas will also be required to comply with the standards in the rule.

Lowndes added the DNR has worked

with the UW Department of Soil Science to offer a Silurian bedrock map tool that can be used to identify areas where the bedrock soil depth is less than 20 feet, and that the department is working with DATCP and county land conservation departments on implementation.

The new rule is based on a long-term effort to seek public input on changes to NR 151, including studies, public meetings and hearings and hosting a technical advisory committee and Groundwater Collaboration Workgroup that met between 2015-2017. 🇺🇸





If you do business in northeast Wisconsin, make sure you are aware of manure rule revisions.

Photo by Yahara Pride Farms



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## Remember to renew your WCO Membership!

**Memberships expire in December - renewals are sent at the end of November. You can renew with your Symposium registration, on the WCO website or by mail. Thank you for supporting Wisconsin's custom farming industry!**

To complete your no fee IoH/Ag CMV permit applications (Required as of January 1, 2015), go to **wisconsin.gov** and search "no fee ag permits"

Questions about IoH definitions and rules? Go to **wiscustomoperators.org/resources**

### **Commercial Pesticide Applicator Training @ Symposium**

WCO is hosting a PAT training and test at noon on Monday, Feb 18 at the Chula Vista.

- Sign up when you register for the conference.
- \$30/person + \$47 for training manual.
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Registration opens in December. Link to buy manual and register at **wiscustomoperators.org**