



What the Heck is a Carbon Offset Anyway?

I recently had the opportunity to see firsthand what can be done with the dollars donated through the Credit Union Cherry Blossom Ten Mile Run Carbon Offset Program. I traveled to Mercersburg Pa. to visit the Northeast Farm Separation Project as the guest of Native Energy, a leading provider of carbon offsets, renewable energy credits and carbon footprint consulting. Since their founding in 2000 their clients have helped build over 50 projects across the United States avoiding more than 1.5 million tons of greenhouse gas emissions. I was joined with several other company representatives from Eileen Fischer, RLP Capital Inc. The Brick Companies, to name a few

Upon arrival we were greeted by Owen Glubiak and Sean Breen from Native Energy and introduced to the farm owners Rod and Rick Hissong. The farm, located in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed, has been in the Hissong family since 1949 and recently expanded to house 1,500 dairy cows and heifers. Dairy farming, as most farming, is facing many challenges both economically and environmentally. Family farms are facing increased operational costs while the price of the dairy products remains flat. Environmental concerns about manure runoff, greenhouse gas emissions, odor, and pathogens are forcing many farmers to change their practices. The practice of storing raw manure waiting to be spread on fields in open lagoons results in the emission of methane, a greenhouse gas 21 times more potent than carbon dioxide. Separating the solids from the manure slurry prevents anaerobic decomposition which produces the methane as well as provides bedding material for the cows which is cheaper than sawdust and more comfortable for the animals. Phosphorus – a major water pollutant – is partially removed during the separation and reduces the potential for runoff into the watershed.

The particular project that the Credit Union Cherry Blossom Ten Mile Run helped to fund through carbon offsets is the installation of a decanter centrifuge system which will press solids onto the inside wall of the cylinder improving the efficiency of the separation. With this installation the Hissongs will be able to remove 80% of the solids from the manure, reduce manure hauling costs, increase the solids which can be used for bedding or soil enhancement and mitigate runoff damage to the watershed.

Last year the Credit Union Cherry Blossom Ten Mile Run received a silver certification by the Council of Responsible Sports www.councilforresponsiblesport.org. This certification was the result of hard work by our volunteer committee, our consultants at Eco Logistics and our runners who recycled at the event and purchased carbon offsets to support programs like the Mercer Vu Farm project. We look forward to continuing our quest for gold certification this year and thank our runners for their support

Becky



Bud Stumak of RLF Capital with Rick and Rod Hisong, owners of Mercer Vu Farm



Project Supporters walking the grounds at Mercer Vu Farm

