

It's about achieving unity from diversity

By SHERRY BUNTING
Special for Farmshine

TOWANDA, Pa.—“It’s all about unity,” says Jon Jenkins, a Bradford County, Pennsylvania dairy producer and board member of the Dairy Policy Action Coalition (DPAC). “As dairymen, we can’t go to Washington with five different plans. We have to come together with one.”

While some may wonder: “Why does Pennsylvania need yet another ‘dairy organization?’” DPAC organizers are quick to point out that the coalition is national in focus and its purpose is to unite dairymen to actively participate in policies and issues affecting milk pricing.

In the past four weeks, the coalition has now received letters, emails, and email sign-ups at the website from more than 300 dairy producers. Of that 300, nearly 100 have contributed anywhere from \$25 to \$1000 to the DPAC effort, with the average producer donation coming in at \$100 to \$250. Those letters and donations have now come in from eight states. And DPAC’s milk pricing action group is bringing in participation of interested producers from outside of Pennsylvania.

DPAC’s government relations consultant Dennis Wolff met with a group of producers in eastern Ohio on Monday. This group has been meeting ever since the large grassroots meeting in Holmes County, Ohio on Sept. 29. Jersey dairyman Alan Kozak, Millersburg, Ohio, reports that a larger follow-up meeting for Ohio producers will be held on Feb. 22 (look for details in next week’s Farmshine).

On Saturday, January 30, members of DPAC’s professional team and two board members with dairy farms in Bradford County spoke during the Bradford County Holstein Club’s annual banquet.

Denny Wolff reported on the immediate actions DPAC is pursuing and his trip to Washington D.C. earlier that week. Bernie Mor-



During the Bradford County Holstein Club banquet January 30, dairy industry challenges were discussed. The club heard from DPAC as well as neighboring Tioga County dairy producer Erick Coolidge, who was recently named to Ag Secretary Tom Vilsack’s dairy advisory committee. From left: DPAC board member and Bradford County dairy producer Gary Kline, DPAC treasurer Bernie Morrissey, Tioga County dairy producer Erick Coolidge, the Pennsylvania Fair Queen, DPAC government relations consultant and former Ag Secretary Dennis Wolff, and DPAC board member and Bradford County dairy producer Jon Jenkins.
Photo submitted by Bradford County Holstein Club

rissey explained how the coalition was formed and what to expect as it gathers momentum to move forward for change.

During the Pennsylvania Dairy Summit Wednesday, Feb. 3, Glenn Gorrell, president of the Professional Dairy Managers of Pennsylvania (PDMP), with a dairy farm in Bradford County, encouraged Summit attendees to look for a Dairy Producer Survey, which will be printed in the February 12 Farmshine and posted on the DPAC website the same week.

The Survey will help DPAC’s milk pricing action group in their work surfacing the ideas that will be deliberated in the coming weeks by the coalition’s charter board. The website, at www.dpac.net, will provide further opportunities for dairy producer feedback as this process evolves.

But even though DPAC is buckling down to the thoughtful process of long term policy

development in relation to the 2012 Farm Bill, they are also moving forward on the short term actions—pushing for implementation of important language in the current 2008 Farm Bill.

As a coalition, DPAC is reaching out and responding to interest from other producer organizations to open lines of communication.

This week, DPAC also sent a letter to U.S. Trade Representative Ron Kirk expressing deep concern about the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) Free Trade Agreement, which could expand dairy trade with New Zealand and other nations that export dairy products to the United States. The TPP negotiations are expected to begin in March.

DPAC opposes inclusion of U.S.-New Zealand dairy trade. A copy of this and other correspondence will be posted on the website next week.

During his recent trip to Washington, Wolff had meetings with staff members for Pennsylvania Senators Arlen Specter (Appropriations Committee) and Robert Casey (Agriculture Committee) as well as U.S. Representative Tim Holden, who is vice-chair of the House Agriculture Committee.

“We talked about moving forward and finding the dollars for implementing language in the current Farm Bill,” Wolff reports. “They were also well aware of the pacific rim trade agreement. They are listening, and looking for a specific achievable agenda they can work on. There is obvious concern for dairy farmers among the Congressional delegation.”

Look for the Dairy Producer Survey in next week’s Farmshine. For more information about DPAC, contact 800.422.8335 or visit www.dpac.net, where visitors can sign up for regular email updates that will begin after Feb. 9.