

# Coalition gathers momentum, sets sights on policy

By SHERRY BUNTING  
Special for Farmshine

EPHRATA, Pa.—The past two weeks have been busy for the newly formed Dairy Policy Action Coalition (DPAC). On December 9, vice-chair Daniel Brandt, a Lebanon County, Pa. dairy producer, testified before the State Senate Agriculture Committee on the issue of milk pricing transparency. The hearing, called by Sen. Ag Committee Chair Mike Brubaker, covered both federal and state milk pricing as legislators wanted a better understanding of both.

Milk price transparency is an area for which DPAC has set immediate action goals. During its second organizational meeting on December 10 in Ephrata, Pa., immediate action items were discussed in detail by the DPAC charter board and Denny Wolff, the coalition's professional advisor and representative.

DPAC charter members traveled again from as far as Butler County, Pa. and Holmes County, Ohio to the second organizational meeting, and several joined by conference call, including Herkimer County, New York dairyman Dale Covert.

While DPAC—as a coalition focused on national milk pricing issues—sprouted from seeds sown by grassroots producers actively meeting in Pennsylvania and Ohio on a localized level, organizers have already heard from interested producers in New York, New England, Maryland, Virginia, and the Midwest.

To move forward as a coalition of grassroots dairy producers, the DPAC charter members approved bylaws to organize the coalition without a dues-paying membership, relying instead on donations and a membership structure consisting of the board of directors and the grassroots dairy producer action groups and resource groups of active dairy producers.

The charter members were installed as the first board of directors, and chairman Cliff Hawbaker explained the formation of action groups and resource groups working on specific areas of dairy policy. Examples include: global activity and markets, supply management, milk pricing structure (federal orders, CME), and regulatory (PMO).

A chart helped explain this organizational vision and flow as the coalition is similar to a community fire company of volunteers: In other words, the coalition is made up of grassroots dairy producers coming together for the benefit of the greater community of all dairy producers. And 'friends of DPAC' can help fund the effort with their contributions.

DPAC has also formed an ad hoc members action group.

## DPAC Update

*'Controlling your own destiny'*

Pennsylvania producer Duane Hertzler and Ohio producer Alan Kozak have already begun the work of seeking out and facilitating a 'second row' of producers from five regions of the U.S. to work in conjunction with the DPAC charter board.

The organizational vision also provides for receiving advice and input from dairy producers with special expertise or guests providing such expertise. Some examples include: ag industry, market trends, regulations, legal advice, and dairy economics.

All business items previously approved during DPAC's first organizational meeting (Nov. 19) were ratified after the approval of the bylaws and installment of the charter board on December 10. This includes the hiring of Dennis Wolff and Versant Strategies. Wolff is a nationally known dairy producer and former Pa. Secretary of Agriculture with significant experience in dairy policy, including discussions during the 2007 Farm Bill. Wolff will advise and represent DPAC in its single purpose: To actively participate in dairy policy that affects milk pricing.

In addition to the immediate action items referenced in the box above, DPAC will be working on policy for the 2012 Farm Bill as Farm Bill hearings are expected to begin in March 2010.

An important hub of DPAC activity is the action group on media and information. Hawbaker appointed Pennsylvania producers Dale Hoffman and Logan Bower as well as New York producer Laura Covert to the media action group. They are working on developing DPAC's website where frequent updates and other information will be posted. Stay tuned for more information on the website when it is up and running.

Since the flow of information is so critical, producers are urged to provide email addresses to receive E-updates. And the media action group is working on ways to facilitate input. Those who do not have email or internet, can find frequent updates in *Farmshine*, and as funds become available, DPAC will strive to copy the E-updates to send by mail to those without email.

A letter from DPAC to fellow dairy producers will be inserted in the January 1, 2010 edition of *Farmshine*. This letter will provide an opportunity to send donations, and to include contact information, input and feedback.

### DPAC Immediate Actions to improve price transparency:

1) *Price Reporting*: Urge the implementation of more frequent (daily) electronic NASS price reporting (with auditing) and to include more products.

2) *Inventory Reporting*: Mandatory dairy product inventory reporting (with auditing).

3) *Anti-competition and market concentration concerns*: Provide comment letter for the joint information-gathering workshops that will be conducted nationwide in 2010 by USDA and the Department of Justice (DOJ).

4) *Import assessment for dairy promotion*: Urge USDA to implement the import assessment of 7.5 cents per hundredweight equivalent as mandated in the 2008 Farm Bill Section 1507.

5) *Federal Milk Marketing Order Review Commission*: Urge implementation of the Federal Milk Marketing Order Review Commission as stated in the 2008 Farm Bill Section 1509, instead of or in addition to U.S. Ag Secretary Tom Vilsack's Dairy Advisory Committee. The Federal Review Commission would report its findings to Congress, whereas the USDA Advisory Committee advises the Ag Secretary. The make up of the Commission is also different.

6) *PMMB over order premium*: Continue efforts since testifying at State Senate hearing to improve transparency and distribution of PMMB over order premiums.

The DPAC board also set the second Thursday of each month as their board meeting day. The board will meet monthly in the near term, but the bylaws call for the board to "meet at least once a year and as often as necessary to accomplish a task."

The January meeting will coincide with dairy day at the Pennsylvania Farm Show. DPAC has secured a room at the Farm Show for Thursday, January 14. Look for details about this meeting in the next DPAC update.

For producers attending Keystone Farm Show January 5-7 in York, Pa., the Morrissey Insurance booth (#424 in the center of building #4) will serve as DPAC's booth, where producers can visit for more information. The DPAC media action group is also working to identify events in other states, where the coalition can provide information to area producers.

For more information about DPAC, contact 800.422.8335.

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## Getting the word out

Grassroots meeting planned for January 14 at PA Farm Show; Booth #424 at Keystone Show to have members of DPAC team on-hand

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EPHRATA, Pa.—The charter board members of the Dairy Policy Action Coalition (DPAC) have begun mailing letters to agribusinesses seeking financial support of the coalition's grassroots participation in dairy policy that affects milk pricing.

A letter to fellow dairy producers also appears as a 'drop-out' insert in this week's *Farmshine*. The letter provides a brief explanation of DPAC. Since the coalition is not structured as a dues-paying membership, the letter requests producer donations along with the support of agribusinesses that serve dairy farms.

It is very important for DPAC to build its list of contacts and emails as well. Producers are encouraged to provide contact information, particularly email, to receive E-updates about DPAC activities. Growing the list of contacts also increases

## DPAC Update

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the strength of the coalition as it actively participates in dairy policy. The reverse side of the letter inserted in this week's *Farmshine* can be used for providing thoughts and input.

DPAC is also preparing for its next charter board meeting set for Thursday, January 14, 2010.

This third meeting of the newly-formed coalition will coincide with Dairy Day at the Pennsylvania Farm Show, so DPAC has reserved Room C at the Farm Show Complex (on the McClay Street side of the Complex) in Harrisburg, Pa.

to host a grassroots producer meeting from 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. following board business.

The grassroots portion of the DPAC board meeting will give attending producers the opportunity to learn more about the coalition and its organizational vision.

DPAC's public affairs and governmental relations representative, Dennis Wolff, will give an update on milk pricing and DPAC's immediate action items.

Charter members from Pennsylvania and Ohio will give a brief update on fundraising efforts and how grassroots groups of producers from other states are looking to get involved with the coalition.

A portion of the afternoon will be set aside for questions and feedback from attending producers as the DPAC charter board seeks input and is forming Action Groups to work on aspects of long term policy before the 2012 Farm Bill hearings begin in 2010.

Key legislators and officials are also being invited to the Jan. 14 DPAC meeting in Harrisburg, Pa.

Website construction is underway and should be up and running by the January 14 meeting.

DPAC is also working on a variety of communication efforts with the Pennsylvania state legislature and administration as follow up to the public testimony provided on December 9 during the Pennsylvania Senate Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee hearing on milk price transparency.

The DPAC Action Group responsible for issues relating to Pennsylvania Milk Marketing law has had two meetings in the past two weeks to work on proposals related to the Pennsylvania over-order premium.

For producers attending the Keystone Farm Show next week, January 5-7 in York, Pa., the Morrissey Insurance booth (#424 in the center of building #4) will serve as DPAC's booth, with a member of the DPAC team available each day to answer questions.

For more information about DPAC, contact Bernie Morrissey at 800.422.8335



## Attention dairy producers:

**The charter board of the Dairy Policy Action Coalition (DPAC) has an important letter appearing as an insert in this week's Farmshine. Please take time to read the coalition's message to fellow dairy producers.**