

THE Bridge

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Conservation
partners with
business,
agriculture and
government
to find
environmental
solutions that
make economic
sense.

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LETTER FROM THE Executive Director

DEAR FRIENDS,

When it comes to helping California farmers promote a healthy planet in ways that make good business sense, Sustainable Conservation has never shied away from rolling up our sleeves and getting our hands dirty.

We've partnered with innovative dairy farmers statewide to turn what their cows leave behind into clean, renewable energy and fuel. We're proud to have co-developed the nation's first "cow powered" truck that runs on biogas produced from manure. While not always pretty, we've also helped farmers dramatically cut dust and diesel emissions to protect clean air – and slash the use of chemical fertilizers to protect clean water for people and wildlife.

We're at it again.

Got (Clean) Water?

Through a unique program over the last two years, Sustainable Conservation worked hand-in-hand with a growing number of Central Valley dairy farmers like Melvin Medeiros – whom you'll read about inside – to implement novel methods for managing manure that ensure tasty milk is synonymous with clean water.

Together, we're keeping almost 400 million pounds of cow manure a year out of waterways – nearly double the waste produced by San Francisco's human population. Dairy farmers are using this valuable manure to fertilize the crops they feed their cows – rather than using petroleum-based fertilizer. And, by using reclaimed liquid manure to irrigate crops, our farming partners conserve nearly 9 million gallons of limited fresh water each year.

These gains are news enough to celebrate, but our results extend beyond the water faucet. Our work saves Melvin and other dairy farmers thousands of dollars in fertilizer and feed costs each year, and helps them meet clean water standards.

A vibrant dairy industry, clean water, delicious milk ... protecting the environment never tasted so good.

Warm Regards,

Ashley Boren

Ashley Boren
Executive Director



Central Valley Farmer Cultivates Clean Water

For California dairy producers like Melvin Medeiros, farming isn't just a job ... it's a way of life.

"My passion is making the best milk there is," he explained during a recent visit to his 300-acre farm outside Fresno. "And, because my family lives off this land and we drink the water that's beneath it, we want to farm in the healthiest way possible."

Going with the Flow

Since 2008, Sustainable Conservation worked with Melvin on innovative ways to manage manure from his 1,300 Holsteins to benefit clean water – as well as his bottom line.

Sustainable Conservation's Dairy Water Quality Grant Program (funded by the

California Water Quality Control Board) enabled Melvin to extend his novel underground piping system (pictured below) that pumps nutrient-rich manure water from his herd to irrigate 200 acres of corn he feeds to his cows.

Previously, Melvin relied on synthetic fertilizers made using fossil fuels, which can pollute water sources and even deplete beneficial nutrients in soil.

The more manure he's able to distribute and the more his crops can take up, the less there is to potentially contaminate water on and off his farm. By using wastewater from his dairy, Melvin also pumps less groundwater to irrigate his crops. This is good news for California, as the state faces another potential drought year.

Besides the water quality benefits, supplying his crops with cow manure instead of chemical fertilizers saves Melvin \$15,000 annually.

"Melvin is ahead of the curve and delivers a powerful message to other producers," said Sustainable Conservation Project Manager Joe Choperena. "He's a great example of how leveraging the benefits of a resource like manure is helping farmers across California protect clean water and healthy communities, as well as promote an important industry like dairy farming."

What does Melvin think of farming in ways that protect the environment and his business? "It's in my blood."

Thanks to Sustainable Conservation's Dairy Water Quality Grant Program, Central Valley dairy farmer Melvin Medeiros now uses nutrient-rich manure water from his Holsteins to irrigate corn he feeds his happy cows.

CLEAN WATER ACROSS CALIFORNIA

Through our Dairy Water Quality Grant Program, Sustainable Conservation partnered with dozens of Central Valley dairy farmers like Melvin Medeiros to implement technologies that effectively manage dairy waste. Our partnerships not only benefit clean water, but promote healthy communities and strengthen a vital California industry. Each year, the projects funded under Sustainable Conservation's grant program ...

- **PREVENT NEARLY 400 MILLION POUNDS OF MANURE – AND ALMOST 4 MILLION POUNDS OF NITROGEN – FROM POLLUTING WATER SOURCES.** That's equivalent to the waste produced by 1.4 million people and enough nitrogen to grow nearly 15,000 acres of corn – roughly 10% of the total acreage in California dedicated to growing corn for people.
- **SAVE CALIFORNIA DAIRY FARMERS TENS OF THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS IN FERTILIZER COSTS.** Utilizing manure instead of commercial fertilizers, which are made using fossil fuels, also lowers farmers' carbon footprints.
- **CONSERVE NEARLY 9 MILLION GALLONS OF FRESH WATER.** Irrigating crops with liquid manure saves as much limited fresh water as is used by about 100, three-person families each year.

Melvin Medeiros's new wastewater system keeps water on and off his farm clean, reduces the use of chemical fertilizers and cuts costs.



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Governor Signs Sustainable Conservation's Landmark Brake Pad Bill

More than 15 years of perseverance paid off in September. Governor Schwarzenegger signed into law a Sustainable Conservation-sponsored bill (SB 346) that phases out copper in vehicle brake pads, which we know from our years of in-depth studies is the largest source of human-generated copper in California's urban runoff.

Copper in vehicle brake pads is released in the form of dust every time drivers apply their brakes. That dust settles on roads and washes into storm drains, and eventually finds its way into urban creeks, rivers and bays.

Once water-borne, copper can harm aquatic species – including imperiled salmon whose numbers have hit a record low in recent years. Copper in the environment also impacts California cities. Once it dissolves in waterways, it is extremely difficult and expensive to remove. So, in addition to promoting clean water and wildlife, the legislation helps cities like Los Angeles avoid potentially billions of dollars in fines and new water treatment facilities.

Led by Sustainable Conservation, SB 346 was drafted through a unique alliance between the auto industry, brake pad manufacturers, environmental groups, stormwater agencies and coastal cities. We jointly studied the science and agreed on a practical way to remove copper from automobile brake pads while providing drivers with safe, reliable brakes.



Governor Schwarzenegger and Sustainable Conservation Executive Director Ashley Boren.

Sustainable Conservation thanks our many supporters and partners for making SB 346 a reality. Together, we've demonstrated that when business, environmental and government leaders work together, our state government can enact effective environmental legislation that benefits everyone.



Sustainable Conservation

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