

Robert Padula

I strongly support the West River Dairy Expansion near Morris, Minnesota by Riverview Dairy.

Riverview LLC has been an exemplary business and a role model for Agriculture companies. This local Minnesota Agribusiness has been open and honest in promoting their expansion plans to the general public prior to expanding and has gone above and beyond the legal thresholds to ensure compliance with the strict state feedlot rules and environmental requirements. If a proposed site has apprehension by local nearby residents, the company arranges for meetings and site tours of other facilities nearby to assure the local residents how a new site will operate. They have routinely been a good neighbor and work hard to maintain a positive relationships in the local area/community. Family members of the dairy, farmers who supply feed to the dairy, the on-site workers and others who supply supportive services to Riverview LLC are active members in the community; Positive community relations are part of the business model. The people investing in Riverview are local owners, not "outside investors" - they are citizens that live in the communities where their dairy operations exist. It is not just the dairy owners, but all the supportive service providers that also live in the community. The Lauriston Dairy site is very close to MN highway 40 and is highly visible showing the public how they operate all the facilities. One only needs to drive near their other facilities to see that all of them are well kept, maintained, neat & tidy demonstrating Riverview's commitment to being good neighbors in the local community.

Dairy farming in the area helps diversify agriculture away from the prevalent "mono-crop" rotation of Corn/Soybeans. This decreases the reliance on agricultural exports and provides a local outlet and value-added benefit to the crops grown locally. Not only will this benefit the farmers in the area, but all the supportive services that rely upon Agriculture and diversification of crops grown in the area will benefit. Diversification of agriculture in the area is also beneficial to wildlife and pollinators.

From the environmental and regulation point of view, feedlots of this size and capacity are heavily regulated and scrutinized to ensure compliance with the strict state regulations for water usage, runoff containment, manure management, dust, odor, pest control and animal health/well-being. This is done well before the first shovel of dirt is moved, prior to construction. The state does not allow a site to begin construction until all the environmental and regulatory permits have been granted. Riverview has always been open and upfront with expansion projects, complying with all the necessary local, state and federal guidelines. They employ staff that are trained and certified to maintain the requirements to ensure compliance. Being a large existing operation, they are constantly under the microscope and subject to outside scrutiny. If there is an area that needs improvement, staff and sites are willing to work with local, state and federal agencies to correct any issues and problems; in fact they seek out ways to be proactive, rather than reactive.

As a livestock farmer and former University of Minnesota Extension Service Livestock Production Systems Agent in West Central Minnesota, I managed a 10 county manure management in West Central Minnesota for 4 years. I know that Riverview has a proven track record of positive compliance and how they have been innovative and proactive in ensuring environmental safety and protection of the environment and local resources. The owners and farmers associated with Riverview also live in the community, and want to ensure that operations are not just "technically legal" but beneficial for the land and everyone who depends on it.

In closing, I fully and whole-heartedly support the expansion of of West River Dairy.