



L&C Office of Sustainability Joins Forces with Area Farmers

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GODFREY – Many regional farmers are already taking action to reduce their environmental impact, and on Feb. 8 had the chance to share best practices with Lewis and Clark Community College officials, who were ready to listen. Lewis and Clark President Dale Chapman and Foundation Board Vice President

Robert McClellan, along with the college's Office of Sustainability, met with a room full of farmers from across the region to strategize.

“The public is constantly bombarded by bad environmental news as it relates to global warming, water quality, energy consumption – you name it. During the meeting, we heard from a group of growers who, along with other agri-businesses, make up a significant sector of the local economy,” said Marcia Lochmann, director of Sustainability and Public Engagement at L&C. “These professionals shared one sustainable farming practice after another. Farmers are taking action to reduce their environmental impact while meeting ever increasing demands to feed a hungry world – their story of hard working farm families with an admirable land ethic just isn't being told.”

Meeting participants learned that many area farmers have already invested in technologies like:

- Precision farming, which allows the farmer to input fewer chemicals while increasing yields
- Crop rotation, which leads to long-term improvement of soil quality
- Rye grass planting, which controls erosion and builds the soil
- Programs like “Keep it for the Crop,” which help manage nutrient applications

They also discussed topics such as agriculture education in the classroom, cellulosic ethanol, biofuels, regulatory pressures, tiling practices, the farm bill and the need to better inform policy makers.

“I am looking forward to seeing where this program goes,” said David Rahe, a 25-year veteran of the Natural Resource Conservation Service, who now works as a soil and crop consultant.

“If the college can stick with offering solid information and steer away from telling farmers what to do, it has potential,” Rahe reported in his blog, “Observations in Agriculture” (<http://daverahe.blogspot.com/>).

As chair of the National Great Rivers Research and Education Center, President Chapman understands the consequences of extra nutrient loads in waterways, like the “dead zone” in the Gulf where the shrimping industry continues to decline because of the nitrogen and phosphorous that are entering the water supply upstream.

“If all producers, municipalities, sewer districts, septic users and individuals in the Mississippi River watershed were as proactive and open-minded as the farmers in our region, I believe we would be well on our way to a healthier watershed, Gulf of Mexico, drinking water supply and community,” Chapman said.

“What we strongly believed in advance of this gathering was reinforced today,” McClellan said. “We have much to learn from area farmers and there is much we can do together in building a robust and sustainable ecological economy.”

Officials hope the meeting was only the beginning of a long-lasting dialogue between the two constituencies.

“We want to continue sharing solutions for protecting our natural resources while growing the local economy and feeding the world for generations to come. That is what sustainability really means, after all,” Lochmann said. For more information or to get involved in future meetings, contact Lochmann at (618) 468-4827 or mlochmann@lc.edu.