

Wicki Biz

If it's business in Maine, it's news to us

Oakhurst prez in D.C. for national recognition for sustainability

Posted on [March 9, 2012](#)

I wrote Wednesday about how Nancy Srojny of Cape Elizabeth [had been honored](#) that day in Washington, D.C., for her work with the Portland SCORE Chapter.

Turns out she wasn't the only Mainer in our nation's capital accepting an accolade or two.

On that same day, Bill Bennett, president of the family-owned [Oakhurst Dairy](#) in Portland, was being recognized in D.C. for the dairy's best-in-class sustainable business practices.



According to an Oakhurst release, Bennett accepted an award for Honorable Mention for Outstanding Dairy Processing & Manufacturing in the first ever U.S. Dairy Sustainability Awards from the Innovation Center for U. S. Dairy. The program, Oakhurst said, was designed to recognize dairy farms, dairy companies and collaborative partnerships for efforts that advance the sustainability of the dairy industry.

“Oakhurst Dairy has made caring for the environment and their community a core value,” said Erin Fitzgerald, senior vice president of sustainability for the Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy, which was founded by dairy producers. “By developing a sustainability road map, they are able to focus on key opportunities and track progress against their goals. We commend them for their successes to date and hope that their actions are emulated by many companies.”

The Oakhurst release said the Maine dairy, [which this year turns 90](#), was recognized for its formal sustainability program, which has set 20 percent reduction goals across aspects of the operation by 2014. The company has established an internal process to monitor, evaluate and benchmark improvements. Over a two-year period (2008-2010), Oakhurst reduced its plant energy, greenhouse gas emissions, water use and transportation fuel use by roughly 10 percent each – almost halfway to its 2014 goals.

“We’ve been spearheading initiatives to enrich the local environment and dairy industry for as long as I can remember,” said Bennett. “Years ago, we didn’t think of it as sustainability – it was more about doing the right thing for our community.

“At Oakhurst, we’re always exploring new ideas that focus on preserving the environment while allowing us to continue to operate a sustainable and profitable business. Implementing sustainable projects will be something we do forever because it’s part of who we are as a company.”

Some of the company’s efforts include: using locally produced biodiesel fuel which now meets 14 percent of the company’s overall fuel needs; adding truck skirts to its fleet of semi tractor trailers which result in 6 percent to 8 percent per vehicle fuel savings; investing in innovative technologies including a hybrid delivery truck which uses 25 percent less fuel, hybrid vehicles for 45 percent of the company’s auto fleet (including sales force) and an alternative energy source such as thermal solar energy as a means to reduce the company’s dependence on petroleum.