

Madison Dairy wins Georgia Environmental Stewardship Award Bobby Smith, UGA Cooperative Extension- Morgan County

By Stephanie Schupska University of Georgia

Dairy cows are Everett Williams' life. Whether he's cutting hay, reusing water or finding more ways to make his dairy viable and environmentally friendly, his work circles around his family farm near Madison, Ga., and the cows that walk into the milking barn three times a day.

He was honored for his environmentally friendly farming practices at Georgia Agriculture Day in Atlanta, where Gov. Nathan Deal announced Williams and his wife Carol of WDairy LLC as the 2011 Governor's Agricultural Environmental Stewardship Award state winner.



Everett Williams, middle right, is congratulated by Georgia Gov. Nathan Deal, right, after winning the 2011 Georgia Environmental Stewardship Award on March 22 at Georgia Ag Day in Atlanta. At left, Carol Williams accepts congratulations from Georgia Agriculture Commissioner Gary Black.

Image credit: Stephanie Schupska/UGA. ([view image](#))



Carol and Everett Williams, center, celebrate their win and their new Georgia Environmental Stewardship sign along with Georgia Agriculture Commissioner Gary Black, left, and Gov. Nathan Deal, right.

Image credit: Stephanie Schupska/UGA. ([view image](#))

The state winner is chosen from five district winners. The other district winners were Will Harris of White Oaks Pastures in Early County, Andy Futch of R&A Orchards in Gilmer County, Cecil Stafford of Blueberry Hill near Ludowici and Jeff Herrin of L.L. Herrin Family Farm near Cornelia. "The farms are all great, great places," Carol Williams said, "and to just pick one would be so hard. Winning this award is a great honor."

The Georgia Center for Innovation in Agribusiness coordinates the award and its judging. Nominees are chosen based on their farms' environmental benefits, voluntary compliance to environmental measures, leadership and economic viability. "These farmers are good environmentalists," said Donnie Smith, the center's director and the agriculture liaison to the governor, "and that's what we want to showcase. We want to show the practices they are using and share their stories with the state as they help make their farms better for future generations."

Williams has had a busy winter. Besides hosting the environmental stewardship judging team, he also rented a nearby farm and with the help of sons Justin and Daniel cleared out hedgerows to make room for a pasture. He's also getting ready to plant corn and cut silage. "It's starting to get busy around the farm," he said.

WDairy births an average of 100 calves a month. They have about 1,900 cows total. Recycling is a big part of his operation. "We've put the total package together," he said. "We recycle sand, manure and water; and we do it in a manner that also makes money."

Sand covers the floor of his dairy barn, giving his cows soft places to rest and Williams a way to capture their waste cleanly. Several times a day, they spray down the barn floor with water. That water sweeps out cow manure and sand. The sand is captured, cleaned and recycled. The manure goes into a separator, where the dry parts are captured and later used as fertilizer. The liquid goes through several holding ponds until the sun and vegetation clean it, and it's used to irrigate the corn, sorghum and rye that the cows eat. The Williams also use conservation tillage to protect the land and increase yields on the farm.

"The Williams are the poster children for nutrient management in the state of Georgia," said Bobby Smith, the University of Georgia Cooperative Extension agent in Morgan County who works closely with the Williams and other dairy producers. "They do a great job," he said, "and it's nice that they're being recognized for what they do every day, what they do because they want to, not because they have to."

Despite all the practices that he's put into place, the one thing Williams is most proud of is that his children are involved. "We have two sons that have gone to school, and they've come back," he said. "And we have daughters interested in agriculture."



Everett Williams, center, checks the moisture level in just-cut rye grass on his dairy in Madison, Ga. Image credit: Stephanie Schupska/UGA. ([view image](#))



Bobby Smith, University of Georgia Cooperative Extension coordinator in Morgan County, works closely with dairies in his area, helping them troubleshoot and plan for the future. Image credit: Stephanie Schupska/UGA. ([view image](#))

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