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Governor Doyle, County Executive Falk Break Ground on Dane County Clean Energy Project

Dane County "Cow Power" Facility will Produce Clean Energy, Clean Local Lakes

WAUNAKEE – Governor Jim Doyle today broke ground on a \$12 million community digester project that will help clean Dane County air and lakes, and generate enough clean energy to power 2,500 homes. Governor Doyle joined Dane County Executive Kathleen Falk for the groundbreaking of the "Cow Power" project at the Ripp's Dairy Valley farm in Waunakee.

"The Dane County Digester demonstrates the best of our past and future in agriculture – putting to work three local farms to power our homes and clean our environment," Governor Doyle said.

"With the turn of these forks today, we begin new, exciting work to clean up our lakes and turn a big problem into a valuable commodity," County Executive Kathleen Falk said. "Thanks to the help of the Governor, the courage and willingness of these farmers to be good stewards of the lakes and lands we love, and the ingenuity of Clear Horizons, we're pioneering an innovative solution to generate green energy and curtail an environmental problem."

In March 2009, Governor Doyle announced his support for the project. The state is providing \$3.3 million in assistance for the first of two Dane County Digesters. The community digester is the first of its kind in the state – involving three family farms: Ripp's Dairy Valley, White Gold Dairy and Richard Endres Farm.

Construction is expected to be completed later this year. Once operational, the facility will convert manure from the farms into nearly \$2 million worth of electricity per year. Electricity generated by the digester will be enough to run 2,500 Dane County homes annually.

The community digester will create construction jobs and full-time jobs to run the digester. The project will also help local farms expand their operations.

Governor Doyle has strongly supported clean energy and agriculture over the past seven and a half years. Under Governor Doyle's leadership, Wisconsin has invested and promoted its diverse farm economy. Incentives to help modernize the dairy industry have helped increase milk production to record levels and have strengthened the state's status as the number one producer of cheese in the country.

At the same time, efforts to strengthen diversity in agriculture have made Wisconsin a leading producer of cranberries, specialty cheeses, organic vegetables and many other products. To enable successful farming for future generations, the state's best farmland is protected under the Working Lands Initiative that Governor Doyle signed into law in 2009.

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Since taking office, Governor Doyle has advanced an aggressive agenda to position Wisconsin as a leader in growing a clean energy economy. Wisconsin has adopted renewable portfolio standards, invested in green job creation, led the advancement of research in cellulosic ethanol and biomass, and made great strides to increase energy efficiency in homes, businesses and government buildings.

Construction of the "Cow Power" facility culminates years of work led by Dane County Executive Falk to reduce the runoff of manure into local waterways. In 2005, Falk commissioned a study that after extensive research, recommended the county work with groups of farmers to construct manure digesters to help clean up the Yahara Lakes watershed.

"This Cow Power Energy Plant shows that farmers, environmentalists, the county and state can work together for cleaner lakes, energy, and jobs," said Dane County Supervisor Brett Hulseby, who chaired the county manure taskforce that called for the manure digester.

Dane County has 400 dairy farms that milk 50,000 cows. Dairy farming is a \$700-million a year industry in the county and creates around 4,000 jobs here.