



Environmental News

Welcome to the summer 2016 issue of Farm & Food Care's Environmental News. Here we review the work that Farm & Food Care is doing with environmental issues on behalf of our members. If you want any info on our projects, contact mel@farmfoodcare.org

Water & Agricultural Nutrient Community of Practice | A meeting was held on April 7 for approximately 100 government staff, researchers and farmers to learn about new research in the field and to network and discuss drainage, water quality monitoring, soil erosion, watershed projects etc. Notes from the day are available on our website

Environmental Advisory Council | On June 9, Farm & Food Care's Environmental Advisory Council met to share common concerns from across the industry and discuss Farm & Food Care's environment initiatives. In June we focused on soil. Karen Haugen-Kozyra called from Viresco Solutions in Alberta to talk to the council about carbon offset markets (for soil BMPs) and the potential for Ontario under the new cap and trade system. OMAFRA's Kevin McKague spoke about soil erosion in Ontario and how we can control it. Lastly, Paul Smith and Sara Moore-German introduced OMAFRA's work with industry on creating a provincial soil strategy. They will be releasing a discussion paper for public comment in the near future.

Planting Green | Footage of a few farmers from across Ontario planting directly into live, standing cover crops was recorded this spring.

We are following these farmers throughout the growing season in order to better understand the opportunities and challenges of protecting soil from erosion and building organic matter.

Promoting Pollinators | Four short videos on how farmers are promoting pollinators on-farm were produced and released for International Pollinator Week in June.

Smart Water Assessments | Farm & Food Care has been visiting farms and processors to help them improve water use efficiency. Good news stories were written on Leamington vegetable growers in order to highlight the best practices of greenhouse management.

Summer Intern | Howard Tong joins us for the summer as a research intern. He has a degree in Environmental Engineering from the University of Waterloo, and is helping us develop the Phosphorus file before heading to Western for his Master's degree in the fall. A big welcome to both Howard and his counterpart, Ashley Rutherford, who is interning as Farm & Food Care's animal care researcher.



August 2016

Volume 3, Issue 2

This newsletter highlights Farm & Food Care's environmental projects and partnerships. Your comments and suggestions are welcome.

Find us on social media



@FarmFoodCareON



facebook.com/FarmFoodCare



Farm & Food Care



Farm & Food Care



FarmFoodCare

farmfoodcareON.org

On-Farm Solutions for Lake Erie

July 6th Bus Tour for Government Staff



Farm & Food Care partnered with OFA and CFFO to take 50 senior government staff from OMAFRA and the MOECC on a bus tour in the Chatham area highlighting what farmers are doing to address Lake Erie phosphorus concerns. The complexity of regional challenges and opportunities were demonstrated. These industry challenges covered four main messages:

Greenhouses recycle and manage nutrient water as best they can (Truly Green Farms, Chatham). Nutrient water is used and reused efficiently, but cannot be recycled indefinitely due to buildups of pathogens or salts. When this water is eventually discharged, it is land applied or sent to municipal waste water treatment plant.

Farmers build soil health to reduce erosion (Blake Vince's farm, Merlin). Adam Hayes demonstrated that minimizing tillage and keeping soil covered is important to reducing soil erosion rates. Blake uses cover crops and no-till, but his stunted corn field demonstrated that these practices can be risky. Revisions to crop insurance policies may help farmers be more willing to adopt cover crops and min-till.

Farmers, retailers and crop advisors are using 4R Nutrient Stewardship (panel of retail, CCA and farmers at the Deer Run Golf Course, Blenheim). Industry reps demonstrated that the whole sector is coming together on the 4R nutrient strategy. Blenheim farmer John Nooyen's message: "I use fertilizer as efficiently as I can to produce the largest yields I can,

because I'm a businessman and I don't want to lose nutrients." Kingsville farmer Henry Denotter's message: "I'm doing the right thing and it is costing me a lot to do it." Farmers and retailers were invited to network with government staff over lunch.

Wetlands offer opportunities for filtration, but land prices are a challenge (Keith McLean farm, Rondeau). Tile drainage is absolutely necessary for agriculture and it decreases surface erosion. There are opportunities to use wetlands to filter and slow down tile water, but farmland values makes it difficult to do.

The feedback from the evaluations was positive:

- *I am pleased that the agriculture industry and sector is taking a leadership role in addressing nutrient issues affecting Lake Erie.* (MOECC participant)
- *There are many innovative farmers that care about the environment and their land.* (OMAFRA participant)
- *I didn't realize how expensive farm equipment is.* (MOECC participant)
- *I see that industry is ahead of us.* (Federal participant)

Participants hoped for more similar where they could interact with farmers "on agriculture's turf." Overall, we are pleased with the positive interaction and networking that took place on the bus tour and we hope to continue collaborating with government staff in order to find Lake Erie phosphorus solutions that are practical for agriculture.

