



# Environmental News

Welcome to the fall 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](mailto:mel@farmfoodcare.org).

**Environmental Advisory Council** | On October 3rd, Farm & Food Care's Environmental Advisory Council met to share common concerns from across the industry and discuss Farm & Food Care's environment initiatives. We heard about the Lake Erie ecosystem and cyanobacteria blooms from Dr. Ron Griffiths from the MOECC. Ron Campbell joined us from the Ontario Agribusiness Association (OABA) to give an update on the 4R Nutrient Stewardship program and its roll-out to retailers. Charlie Lalonde added the farm-scale perspective of 4R adoption.

**Video Projects** | A number of videos promoting best practices across the agriculture sector are being created. Subjects covered include planting cover crops, promoting pollinators through growing on-farm habitat and disposal of obsolete pesticides through the CleanFARMS project.

**Farmland Rental Agreements** | Farm & Food Care created an online resource last year with GLASI funding for the promotion of written agreements for farmland stewardship. The topic will be front and centre this winter at Latonnell Conservation Symposium, the SouthWest Agricultural Conference and FarmSmart.

**Water Smart Farm Project** | Farm & Food Care continues to work with vegetable washing facilities, irrigators and greenhouses across the province to run water audits and highlight best practices being used in the industry.

**Working Groups** | Farm & Food Care plays an active role on several committees, including the Great Lakes Guardians Council and the Phosphorus Working Group. Staff are also contributing to a cover crops working group.

**Soil Leadership Program** | With funding from OMAFRA and GF2 (AAC), and in collaboration with Ontario Soil & Crop Improvement Association and Innovative Farmers, Farm & Food Care is launching a one-year pilot project to create a social marketing and leadership program for farmers who have adopted soil-first farm management, such as cover crops and no-till.

*We'd like to extend a big thank you to Paul Wetlaufer for all his work at Farm & Food Care. He will be stepping down as chairman of the Environment Advisory Council and we will be electing a new chair at the next meeting, along with a representative to the CCA and Pesticide Education board. For more information on what these positions entail, please contact Mel.*



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

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# Updates from the Environmental Registry

012-8760

## Reducing Phosphorus to Minimize Algal Blooms in Lake Erie

Closes: November 20, 2016

MOECC: Many agricultural commodity groups have joined the Grow Ontario Together effort to present a [position paper](#) to the government related to responsible nutrient usage. Following public consultation, Canada and the U.S. formally adopted a science-based binational target of 40 percent reduction in phosphorus loads for the western and central basins from 2008 levels, based on an adaptive management framework. Canada's allocated portion of this reduction is 212 tonnes, while the U.S. reduction is 3315 tonnes.

The EBR posting and the Direct Action Plan will lay the framework for the government's proposed short-term and long-term actions. This EBR posting lays out 7 actions for discussion that impact agriculture: (*see EBR for full text*)

### Proposed Action:

- Partner with the agriculture sector to further enhance outreach to farmers to promote the application of nutrients at the right time. Considering tighter restrictions on the application of nutrients during this period.
- Support for the implementation of an Ontario industry-led 4Rs program
- Continue to leverage funding for initiatives such as the Great Lakes Agricultural Stewardship Initiative (GLASI) that support nutrient management and soil health best practices within targeted areas in the Lake Erie basin.
- Develop an Agricultural Soil Health and Conservation Strategy to support agricultural soil management practices
- Work with the agricultural sector to enhance and promote environmentally sustainable best practices, including the development of information and tools to increase use of cover crops during the non-growing season to reduce soil loss and field runoff.
- Develop a publicly available digital elevation model of the Lake Erie watershed (based on LiDAR technology) to assist all stakeholders with environmental stewardship planning.
- In collaboration with the greenhouse sector, will continue to work towards eliminating phosphorus-containing wastewater from entering Leamington area watercourses.

Comments may be submitted to: [land.water@ontario.ca](mailto:land.water@ontario.ca) or by other means indicated in the EBR.

012-8468

## Discussion Document for Developing an Agricultural Soil Health and Conservation Strategy for Ontario

Closes: November 27, 2016

OMAFRA: released a discussion document that outlines the vision, goal and objectives of a soil strategy in August. This EBR is seeking input on the vision before developing a draft strategy with proposed actions and seeking input again. In the document, the Minister of Agriculture highlighted:

- 30 million dollars are earmarked to support soil health initiatives under Ontario's Climate Change Action Plan.
- Federal-provincial investment of 5.1 million to update soil maps, sing LiDAR, GIS, etc.

The document explains why soil is important and defines soil health, soil erosion, etc. and is followed by 16 pages about soil as the technical backgrounder. It emphasizes the role of soil organic matter and the importance of planting cover crops, minimizing compaction, reducing tillage and including livestock manure / organic amendments to soil.

*DRAFT VISION: Healthy agricultural soils contribute to a productive economy, sustainable environment and thriving society*

### DRAFT GOALS:

- *Soil management – encourage BMPs like cover crops, rotation and reduced tillage*
- *Soil information and mapping – improve soil data and accessibility to data*
- *Soil monitoring and modelling – track changes to soil health over time*
- *Soil knowledge and innovation – improve training programs for farmers*

There are a number of questions posed within the document to elicit feedback. Comments may be submitted to: [soilhealth@ontario.ca](mailto:soilhealth@ontario.ca) or by other means indicated in the EBR.

For more information about the EBR or your organization's role, please contact [Bruce@farmfoodcare.org](mailto:Bruce@farmfoodcare.org) or call 519-837-1326 x292

