



# Environmental Farm Plan has many benefits for farmers



Nancy and Mike Dougherty have found the Saskatchewan Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) offers benefits on many levels.

They farm on land near Moose Jaw owned by Mike, his siblings and his father. The Dougherty's operation concentrates on grain, oilseeds and pulse crops. They heard about the EFP program through other farmers in the area and thought it would be good for their operation.

"To be honest, in the beginning it was the financial aspect of it," Nancy says. "It was about getting approval of our environmental farm plan so we could get funding."

She said that going through the self assessment and planning process had other benefits.

"It made us realize the things we were doing really well and the things we should improve on," she says.

The EFP, voluntary and confidential, is designed as an awareness and educational tool, and is not a regulatory program. The EFP's five-step process helps producers understand their current environmental risks, and how they may affect their farming operation now and in the future.

In Saskatchewan, the EFP is delivered by the Provincial Council of Agricultural Development and Diversification Boards (PCAB).

Producers attend a workshop where trained professionals introduce the concepts behind the EFP and work with producers to assess the soil and site characteristics of their operation. Producers then use a workbook to review all aspects of their operations to identify potential risks and solutions.

At a second workshop, facilitators work with producers to determine the steps required to manage any identified risks and to prioritize action items.

The Doughertys found the plan helped them in a number of ways.

"Our main priority is changing our seeding practices," Nancy says. "We want to change to direct seeding and leave more organic material on the surface."

"We want to make it work environmentally as well as for us," she says. "We knew in our heads the areas we should address, but this (plan) really clarified it."

The process also was beneficial in reaffirming some of the practices the Doughertys were already implementing.

Nancy says the family wasn't sure what to expect, but the EFP exceeded their expectations.

"It was a positive experience for us," Nancy says. "I think it will change our farming practices."

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Contact Shelanne Wiles-Longley, Executive Director, Provincial Council of ADD Boards (PCAB), (306) 955-5477 ext 205; or [executivedirector@saskpcab.com](mailto:executivedirector@saskpcab.com)

## PRODUCERS WORKING TOGETHER ON ENVIRONMENTAL PRIORITIES



Agri-Environmental Group Planning (AEGP) is one of the initiatives under the Environment Chapter of the Canada-Saskatchewan Agricultural Policy Framework.

AEGP provides an opportunity for producers to work together to strategically address a priority agri-environmental issue in their area. Group planning projects are in place in the following watersheds:

- Lower Souris River;
- Wood River;
- Lower Assiniboine River;
- Moose Jaw River;
- Lanigan-Manitou,
- Swift Current Creek;
- Redberry Lake;
- Buffalo Pound Lake;
- Gull Lake; and
- Upper Souris River Watershed.

Producers first review an environmental scan of their watershed area and consider potential soil, water, air and biodiversity issues. Most of the groups have selected maintenance of surface water quality as their issue of highest priority.

Upon completion of the agri-environmental group plan, producer members of the group are eligible to apply to the Canada-Saskatchewan Farm Stewardship Program for financial incentives to assist them in implementing Beneficial Management Practices (BMPs) that target the priority issue that they have chosen.

As an example, producers in the Lower Souris Watershed in south-eastern Saskatchewan are implementing more than 160 riparian area management and wintering site management projects. These projects include improved watering systems for livestock, cross-fencing, portable windbreaks and the seeding of forage buffer strips in cropland. The AEGP initiative also provides one-on-one technical assistance for developing site plans and for implementing BMPs.

AEGP projects include workshops and field days to raise awareness of water quality issues and practical ways to make positive management changes. Planning groups also monitor the impact of their efforts and hope

that the concentration of BMP activity will show measurable improvements in water quality and riparian health scores.

In those watershed areas having group plans, it is hoped that producers will become actively involved in AEGP while also doing an Environmental Farm Plan for their individual farming operations.

A second approach to group planning involves producer commodity groups dealing with a priority agri-environmental issue.

Three projects underway involve the Saskatchewan Flax Development Commission (flax straw management to reduce crop residue burning), Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities (integrated management of invasive alien plants) and Saskatchewan Seed Potato Growers (improved pest management).

Saskatchewan is leading the way on the group planning approach to dealing with environmental issues. Other provinces are taking note of successes here and are planning pilot projects.

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Contact Wayne Gosselin at (306) 787-6586 or visit: [www.agr.gov.sk.ca/docs/about\\_us/apf/environment.asp](http://www.agr.gov.sk.ca/docs/about_us/apf/environment.asp)





# Canada-Saskatchewan Farm Stewardship program increases funding limit to \$50,000



Producers in Saskatchewan with a reviewed Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) will now have access to an additional \$20,000 in cost-shared funding, under the Canada-Saskatchewan Farm Stewardship Program (CSFSP), to put in place beneficial management practices on their farms.

“Protecting the environment is everyone’s responsibility and farmers have always shown themselves to be leaders in environmental stewardship in Canada,” federal Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Chuck Strahl said. “That’s why Canada’s new government is committed to working with the provinces and our partners to further support them in

protecting the environment we all share.”

The increase in available funding from \$30,000 to \$50,000 is being made in a number of provinces and will provide producers with additional financial and technical assistance to address environmental risks on their farms through beneficial management practices. These practices aim to:

- protect and improve the environment by maintaining or enhancing the quality of the soil, water, air and biodiversity;
- ensure natural resources used for agricultural production are healthy and sustainable over the long term; and
- support the long-term economic and environmental viability of the agriculture industry.

“Saskatchewan producers have a long record of environmental stewardship,” Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food Minister Mark Wartman said. “By increasing the funding limit, producers will have an easier time moving ahead on a broad range of environmentally beneficial activities on their farms.”

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) is

working with provincial, territorial and industry partners on programs that promote sound farm stewardship to contribute to a cleaner, healthier environment for all Canadians and safer, healthier food for consumers. The National Farm Stewardship Program is a joint program under the Agricultural Policy Framework.

To assist farmers with the implementation of beneficial management practices on their farm, the Provincial Council of Agriculture, Development and Diversification Boards (PCAB) has six Farm Stewardship Advisors (FSA) throughout Saskatchewan. These FSAs work with producers who have completed EFPs and guide them in implementing their action plans. FSAs can help producers access any needed technical support and complete their application for cost-shared funding under the CSFSP.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

- In Saskatchewan, contact the Canada-Saskatchewan Farm Stewardship Program at 1-800-667-8567 or go to [www.agr.gc.ca/env/efp-pfa](http://www.agr.gc.ca/env/efp-pfa); or
- Call PCAB at 1-866-298-PCAB (7222) and ask for Tracy Wickstrom at ext. 202; or
- Visit [www.saskpcab.com](http://www.saskpcab.com)

## SPIRIT CREEK WATERSHED MONITORING COMMITTEE PRESENTS REPORT TO PROVINCE



The Spirit Creek Watershed Monitoring Committee (SCWMC), citizens interested in the well-being of Good Spirit Lake and the Spirit Creek watershed environment, presented the Province with the findings of its five-year report on the environmental impacts of intensive livestock operations in the Yorkton area.

“The work done by the Spirit Creek Watershed Monitoring Committee provides quantifiable proof of the effectiveness of our livestock development environmental regulations and the stewardship of our livestock producers,” Agriculture and Food Minister Mark Wartman said. “Our livestock producers are good stewards of the environment and the report confirms this fact.

“Growing Saskatchewan’s livestock industry is key to stimulating the province’s rural economy. We are committed to ensuring that the development of rural Saskatchewan be done in a way that protects our environment and makes life better for all Saskatchewan families.”

The study included odour monitoring by local residents and two specialists trained to detect and rate the intensity of odours. During two years of monitoring, local residents reported odour free conditions 98 per cent of the time. The committee sampled area soils to establish benchmark nutrient values prior to manure application. Soil testing indicated a general improvement in soil fertility and no evidence of increased risks to the environment. Water sites, including wells, dugout sites, reservoirs and run-off sites, were tested before and after liquid hog manure was injected into the land. Tests show no apparent additional stress on the quality of water within the Spirit Creek watershed.

“This report’s conclusions echo those of the interim report – namely that intensive livestock operations do not have to have a negative impact on the local environment,” SCWMC chairperson Don Walters said.

“Committee members appreciate the opportunity to address concerns regarding large scale hog production as it relates to the Good Spirit Lake watershed.”

The committee has also made recommendations to help ensure the environmental sustainability of the watershed environment. Upon further review of their report, government will consider the recommendations. Soil monitoring in the Spirit Creek area will continue, as recommended by the committee.

Established in 2000, the SCWMC is the first of its kind in Canada and one of few groups to collect baseline data before an intensive livestock facility went into production. Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food, Saskatchewan Environment and Saskatchewan Watershed Authority provided resources for the SCWMC.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

- The SCWMC Five-Year Report is available at <http://spiritcreek.ca/>; or
- Call SCWMC chairperson Don Walters at (306) 783-4828.





# Staying green

by Donald Fontaine, PAG  
Rangeland Management Specialist, SAF  
Saskatoon

Years ago, the term “green” was usually in reference to the color green, a novice, or someone who was air or sea sick. Recently, the term “green” has come to be associated with the environment and how we manage or treat that environment.

The Saskatchewan Pastures Program (SPP) had its beginnings in 1922 with the formation of the Matador Community Pasture near Kyle. During that era, pasture management was somewhat different than current practices, but the concept of “sustainable use” was understood. Much of this land is still as productive today as it was then. Today, the objective is still to maintain the health of the grazing lands, whether they be grasslands or forested lands.

In order to measure the status or the health of the resource, SAF uses range planning/ inventory and monitoring techniques. Lands are assessed using well developed procedures which measure change in the plant community resulting from long-term grazing impact.

For example, grazing lands in excellent condition have a high proportion of desirable species, while heavy grazing over the long term causes these to disappear and be replaced by less desirable species.

Special attention is also given to riparian areas to ensure they continue to function properly. Measuring these changes over time allows us to assess the ecological health of the resource. The inventory gives us an overall view of the plants (and animals) that contribute to the biological diversity of the area. The inventory will also highlight any special problems that need to be addressed, such as invasion of weedy species, soil damage through soil erosion, or excessive bare soil.

Monitoring allows us to track these changes and make necessary adjustments. Good management translates to good livestock health and production. Good management or “staying green” will also support biodiversity and all the goods and services that are associated with it.

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Contact Donald Fontaine, Rangeland Management Specialist, SAF Lands Branch, Saskatoon, phone (306) 933-5682, or see the Forage/Pasture section of SAF’s website at [www.agr.gov.sk.ca](http://www.agr.gov.sk.ca).

# SLEEPLESS IN SASKATCHEWAN

Sleep: we all do it and we all need it! For producers who are feeling the pressures of farming, off-farm work and worrying about how to make the farm pay for itself, getting a good night’s sleep is not always an easy task.

Sleep is important and is connected to our health, safety and well-being. Lack of sleep negatively affects our alertness and performance. Being deprived of sleep affects our carefulness, judgment, decision-making and memory, while slowing down our reaction times and reducing our ability to concentrate. Lack of sleep can also negatively affect our mood.

Jon Shearer, a sleep specialist from Algonquin College in Ottawa, has worked with large audiences, nationally and internationally. Shearer helped them to better understand sleep and identified easy, inexpensive ways people can make sleep work more effectively for them to reduce fatigue and stress, and ultimately, the risk of injury.

His audiences quickly come to understand that there is more to sleep than they realized. Shearer makes it clear that sleep is not one continuous process. “Sleep is composed of five unique parts, with each repairing different mind and body processes as well as setting the stage for the way we feel the next day,” Shearer said. “Each sleep cycle lasts 90 minutes, and I encourage you to sleep for six, seven, or nine hours so a sleep cycle is not broken.” He emphasizes that one should wake up at the end of a cycle to feel well rested.

Sleep fragmentation occurs when one wakes up throughout the night and sleep cycles are interrupted. Shearer identified sleep fragmentation as just as big a problem as the length of time one sleeps. The result of

fragmented sleep is waking up feeling groggy, unrested and unpleasant. Shearer identified too much exercise just before bed, too much nicotine, caffeine or alcohol, sleep aid medications and certain foods as culprits that fragment sleep. Shearer emphasizes that many sleep aid medications are addictive and cause sleep fragmentation, so they should not be used regularly.

He explained the impact light has on our sleep cycles. Many delegates were surprised to learn that a simple broad spectrum light bulb and a timer that gradually turns a light on would be helpful to wake up feeling rested and ready to go. Shearer explained that having broad spectrum light gradually come on while we wake works to slowly stop melatonin production. Melatonin is a hormone connected to our body’s sleep cycle, so to begin the day when there is an abrupt stop in melatonin production starts the day off on the wrong foot. Our body’s clock is altered, consequently making us feel “sluggish” throughout the day.

Shearer enthusiastically called power naps “an exquisite treat for the body.” He encourages people to take power naps, but explained it is important to only take a 20 minute nap, unless there is opportunity to sleep for a full 90 minute sleep cycle. Shearer stressed that anything other than this type of power nap leaves a person feeling lethargic, and that is the opposite of what a power nap should do.

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Contact Kendra Ulmer, Institute for Agricultural Rural and Environmental Health at (306) 966-6643; or
- Contact Ken Imhoff, Farm Stress Unit, SAF at (306) 787-8196

## FARM STRESS LINE

### CHRISTMAS SEASON HOURS

As we approach Christmas and the end of 2006, our thoughts turn to the year that is passing. The holiday season also serves as an opportunity to reach out to others.

Each year is a challenge. The challenges we face during the year are different for each person, and for the different areas of the province. The Christmas season is an opportunity to not only reach out to family and friends, but also an opportunity to reach out to those who may be alone. That’s what neighbourliness is all about.

For those who feel isolated, there is the Farm Stress Line. It’s a peer-to-peer toll-free telephone service, which means you are talking to someone who knows what it’s like to live in today’s farming and ranching world.

The Farm Stress Line will maintain normal hours of operation, Monday to Saturday (8:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.), with the only exceptions being Christmas Day, and New Year’s Day when the Farm Stress Line will be closed.

In the spirit of Christmas, Farm Stress Line staff wish everyone peace and fellowship.

**THE FARM STRESS LINE CAN BE REACHED AT 1-800-667-4442.**



### SLEEPLESS IN SASKATCHEWAN: AN EVENING WITH JON SHEARER

In January and February, the Institute for Agricultural Rural Environmental Health, the Farm Stress Line, and the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities will host an evening with Jon Shearer at the following locations:

- **Lloydminster**  
January 22, 2007
- **Swift Current**  
January 23, 2007
- **Melfort**  
January 24, 2007
- **Estevan**  
February 7, 2007
- **Yorkton**  
February 8, 2007

Details will be advertised, or call Toll Free “Connections-Sask Inquiry” 1-866-680-0006





# Soil nutrient researcher at home in the lab and the field

It's been said that those who can't do, teach, but Dr. Jeff Schoenau defies conventional wisdom.

Born and raised in Saskatchewan, he earned his undergraduate degree and Ph.D. in soil fertility at the University of Saskatchewan's College of Agriculture, but the classroom, the laboratory and the library never took him very far away from the land.

Today, Dr. Schoenau is the Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food (SAF) Strategic Research Chair in Soil Nutrient Management, as well as a working farmer.

"The practical, hands-on experience helps me a lot in my research," says Dr. Schoenau. Between research and teaching at the University of Saskatchewan, he also manages to farm about 1,600 acres near Central Butte. His production includes wheat, canola, barley and pulse crops.



Dr. Jeff Schoenau

Dr. Schoenau's research is part of the \$16.5 million Strategic Research Program, funded by SAF to engage leading scholars in agricultural research and development specific to Saskatchewan producers' needs. He leads research projects aimed at providing innovative solutions to soil nutrient problems, with the objectives of improving crop profitability and maintaining soil quality.

"Really, it's looking at ways to maximize nutrient recovery and minimize losses to maintain and improve the quality of the soil resource. Nutrients cost dollars, and become a potential issue in the environment when they escape," says Schoenau.

Dr. Schoenau's research team includes a full-time assistant, plus contributions from numerous graduate students at the University of Saskatchewan. They are currently working on subjects as varied as fertilizer distribution rate and placement, the use of organics such as alfalfa pellets for soil nutrition, liquid and solid manure qualities and the rejuvenation of forage stands with fertilizer.

The results of the projects are presented to various scientific journals, but more importantly to Dr. Schoenau, he is able to share the new ideas at producer and industry conventions.

He attends many such forums, including soil and crop workshops, direct-seeding meetings and Agriculture Canada field days. "I consider that a very important part of what I do. I do a lot of outreach activities," says Schoenau.

Dr. Schoenau sees producers improving soil nutrient management more and more each year with techniques such as zero-till and crop rotation. "We have, over the past 15 years, done a great job of improving the quality of our soil," he says.

It gives him great optimism to be teaching the new practices to the students who will go on to become leaders in agriculture and government.

Meanwhile, back on the farm, Jeff Schoenau translates academic research into action. "When someone asks me a question about some practice or process I have been looking at, I guess I can always answer with what I would do on my own farm."

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Contact Dr. Jeff Schoenau, SAF Strategic Research Chair, Soil Nutrient Management College of Agriculture, University of Saskatchewan Phone: (306) 966-6844.

## SASKATCHEWAN CONTRIBUTES \$1.5 MILLION TO VIDO



Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food is providing the Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization (VIDO) with \$1.5 million over five years to continue its work of protecting the world from infectious diseases.

"VIDO is an important component of the growing research and development cluster in

Saskatchewan, and plays a vital role in the development of the local and global livestock industry," said Mark Wartman, Minister of Agriculture and Food. "This money will enhance VIDO's research and development initiatives."

"This province's support enables us to continue to retain scientists and staff in Saskatchewan, and to provide a world-class research environment that supports our progress in the prevention of infectious disease," VIDO director Dr. Lorne Babiuk said.

VIDO, created in 1975 and located at the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon, is a not-for-profit global leader in vaccine research to control diseases in both

humans and animals.

Over its history, VIDO has built an international reputation in the development of new vaccine delivery systems, such as oral and intranasal methods, and for its new food safety vaccine initiative. To date, VIDO is

credited with five "world-firsts" in animal vaccine research and holds over 70 patents, with another 25 pending.

Current areas of VIDO research include: enhancement of vaccine efficiency; development of single-dose vaccines; vaccines for food and water safety; vaccines against influenza, hepatitis C and SARS; development of neonatal vaccines; the improvement of early childhood vaccines; and the development of novel approaches to infectious disease control.

VIDO employs more than 140 people in its research facility and 160-acre research station. Major funding for VIDO comes from the governments of Canada, Saskatchewan and Alberta, as well as from industry, private-contract research and philanthropic foundations.

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Contact Abdul Jalil, Director, SAF Agriculture Research Branch, at (306) 787-5960, or Tess Laidlaw, Communications Officer, Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization, at (306) 966-1506.

