

RENFREW COUNTY AGRICULTURAL WATER QUALITY LEADERSHIP GROUP

Renfrew County Stewardship Council
Ontario Federation of Agriculture
Ontario Cattlemen's Association
Ontario Soil and Crop Association
The Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario
Renfrew South District Women's Institute

Gov't of Canada funding – Growing Forward 11
Gov't of Ontario – coordination by OMAFRA

WHY???

- Farmers and Agricultural Groups had a strong sense that the ag community needs to be more engaged and recognized re: water issues in Renfrew County.

WHAT WE HEARD

- EVERYONE WANTS CLEAN WATER
- EVERYONE WANTS COLLABORATION
- EVERYONE ENVISIONS A COMMUNITY EFFORT WITH MORE AWARENESS AND INVOLVEMENT AT THE MUNICIPAL/COUNTY LEVELS.
- A CONSERVATION AUTHORITY MODEL IS NOT DESIRABLE IN RENFREW COUNTY.

STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES

STRENGTHS

- Existing Players and Initiatives
- Geography of Renfrew County
- Strong Municipal Drain System
- Economics of Renfrew County rely on Water
- Increasing Awareness

Challenges: Funding

- Limited Funding Available
- Renfrew County not seen as a priority for funding
- Limited Funding Capacity at Municipal / County Levels

Challenges: Organizing Stakeholders

- Water Quality and Flow not being actively managed at County Level
- Not enough Collaboration among Groups
- Leadership
- Volunteer Time
- Positioning this Work

Challenges: Awareness and Getting Buy-In

- Education and awareness
- Compliance with Best Management Practices
- Unwillingness to Address Issues/
Discouragement
- Difficult to Question our own Practices
- Competing Land Use

WHAT FARMERS HAVE DONE

- Environmental Farm Plan: since 1993
 - \$4.5M on 327 projects
 - Fencing livestock out of water courses
 - Buffer strips
 - Manure storage upgrades
 - Watercourse bank reconstruction
 - Water well upgrades
 - Livestock stream crossings
 - Nutrient Management Training / Plans

BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES (BMP)

- Very site specific
- May be geographically specific eg. what works in S. Ont. doesn't work in Renfrew County
- Often initial costs are the only costs considered in cost sharing programs

MODELS

- We need to create a model that is less fractured and more cohesive..tailored to Renfrew County.
- We need all interested stakeholders , established and new, to bring their strengths and wisdom to one “table” where a paid coordinator at the County level (chosen with input from the group) uses all the information to lobby at the Provincial and Federal levels for funding to enable this “one group” to reach the common goal of clean, well managed water resources in the County.

SUMMARY

- The Agricultural community has a vested interest in the water management process and should be at the table for discussions.
- The Ag community recognizes that water quality is a long term issue and that it must work with levels of gov't, rural businesses, urban and suburban neighbours and other stakeholders to start the process now.
- We must create a basis from which we can lobby for funding.
- We want our Grandchildren and Great Grandchildren to have clean water for drinking, recreation and agriculture.
- We need to take a Leadership Role in being good Stewards of our resources.