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Breaking Ground

(in Northeastern Ontario)

SPRING 10

A Publication of the North Eastern Ontario Soil & Crop Improvement Association (NEOSCIA)

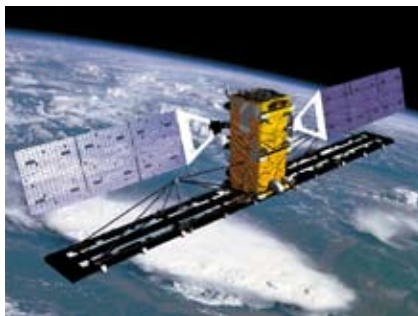
2009 a Banner Year for NEOSCIA

by Janet Parsons, President

A year like no other for agriculture in North Eastern Ontario. The President of OSCIA, Murray Cochrane, was from Algoma; the winner of the Ontario Forage Masters competition, James Parsons, was from Nipissing; and the International Ploughing Match was in Temiskaming. It doesn't get much better than that and these successes were matched by what NEOSCIA accomplished in 2009.

NEOSCIA introduced four new initiatives. First, the pan north-eastern Crop Caravan concept was introduced with much success. Keith Reid travelled to all 8 districts in 5 days discussing Nutrient Management Solutions. The RCC, Graham Gambles, accompanied him and promoted NEOSCIA and met producers.

Next, a link was established with Nipissing University which resulted in a weather station and remote sensing project in Nipissing and Temiskaming districts. Right now



A new management tool for northern farmers?

NEOSCIA is facilitating the development and funding of an agricultural remote sensing research project with Nipissing University worth about a million dollars. Agribusiness in north eastern Ontario is being asked to provide about \$45,000.

In August, Kelly Bird was hired as a FedNor intern to assist with NEOSCIA promotion and research projects. She developed promotional materials, the IPM booth, and provided manpower for booths at both the IPM and the Royal Winter Fair. She has also done extensive background work on

Continued on page 2

FCC Energy Loan

Effective March 01, 2010, Farm Credit Canada is offering a new loan to farm operators who are considering the use of renewable energy sources in their business. The "Energy Loan" will help producers and agribusiness operators purchase and install on-farm energy sources like biogas, geo-thermal, wind and solar power. The loan offers a variable or fixed interest rate, valid for a term up to 5 years.

A recent "FCC Vision Survey" of over 1100 individuals and agribusinesses showed that 37% of the respondents are looking at reducing their environmental footprint by implementing the use of renewable energy options in their operation, and 60% of those surveyed are "considering new ways to find financial value by reducing their environmental impact".

Speak to an FCC representative at the 2010 Earlton Farm Show, April 9 & 10.

NOTE: Sponsors/Advertisers needed for coming year. \$500 for 4 issues!

This newsletter is published 4 times per year. Articles can be submitted in either English or French and should be submitted to the Communication Coordinator (see below). Please supply translation, if available.

Material in this newsletter is based upon factual information believed to be accurate. Action taken as a result of this information is solely the responsibility of the user. We reserve the right to edit articles.

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OBITUARY



Walker Roy Riley (1920-2010)

Long time OMAFRA collegiate, Walker Riley of Muskoka District, passed away on February 21, 2010. A specialist in pasture management and field crops, Walker was always a great asset to the Soil & Crop organizations across the North. His body is interred at St. Mark's Cemetery, Milford Bay.

COMING EVENTS

NEOSCIA 2010 Annual Farm Show & Conference

Friday April 9 - Noon to 9pm

Saturday April 10 - 7am (pancake breakfast) to 3 pm

NEOSCIA "Crop Caravan" Weed & Spray Show with OMAFRA's Mike Cowbrough;

June 14: Muskoka & Parry Sound Districts

June 15: Nipissing & Sudbury Districts

June 16: Manitoulin & Algoma Districts

June 17: Cochrane District

June 18: Temiskaming District

NEOSCIA Summer Tour, Sudbury District, Friday, August 06, 2010

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2009 a Banner Year for NEOSCIA

Continued from page 1

biomass and gave a presentation to high school students in New Liskeard. While the intern project was initiated by NEOSCIA, it is in partnership with the Temiskaming Crop Coalition. Kelly has been working with them and has developed a blog with news and links to BG and the Nipissing University weather station: (<http://temiskamingcc.blogspot.com/>)

Finally, the reporting to Breaking Ground was enhanced by securing Sharon Lane from Algoma District to report on events west of Sudbury.

The only setback during the year was when a fierce snow storm closed the highway during the Trade Show and Conference in Earlton in early April. This is the major fund raising event for NEOSCIA and since it was a wash it made for a difficult year thereafter.

Turning to plans for 2010, the Conference and Trade Show is on April 9 & 10 in Earlton. The Crop Caravan will have a 'Weed and Spray' focus and will be in a 'location near you' in early June. The summer tour will be in Sudbury District in August. Efforts are being made to continue to improve communications using Breaking Ground, access to seminars through the web, and information sharing with the Temiskaming Crop Coalition blogspot.

Research projects continue to be a focus in all north eastern districts and for NEOSCIA. Since more Universities are becoming involved with more projects with more district associations, NEOSCIA is holding a North Eastern Ontario Agricultural Research Forum to give researchers an opportunity to share their research objectives and give farmers an opportunity to provide comments. The main objective would be to enhance co-operation and avoid duplication. NEOSCIA would like to see an overall strategy for agricultural research and co-operation in North Eastern Ontario emerge from these discussions.

We look forward to the NEOSCIA Annual Meeting in April where delegates from across northeastern Ontario take the opportunity to contribute to the future of the organization; it's programs, research, and activities. It's the participation of farmers from across the north that makes NEOSCIA such a success. See you in Earlton in April.

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Edited by: Brian Bell, Agricultural Representative

LOCAL EVENTS

Earlton Farm Show - April 9 and 10:

Friday April 9th from 12:00 -9:00 PM and
Saturday April 10th from 9:00-3:00.

The location is the Earlton arena. Topics include a forage panel and a biomass panel, plus a variety of exhibits ranging from financial planning to agricultural parts & accessories. For more information please contact Kelly Bird, NEOSCIA intern at 705-647-2089.

April - There is interest in holding another **Advantage Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) workshop** in the area. Food safety is everyone's responsibility! That's why Ontario has introduced the Advantage Good Agricultural Practices for Ontario farmers. This resource covers food safety practices at the farm. It offers a whole-farm approach covering all aspects of crop and livestock production. The practices can be applied to any farm, regardless of size, farming methods or products produced. For multi-commodity farms, the Advantage manual allows farmers to use only one resource and keep one set of records. OMAFRA offers a series of free workshops to help you with your food safety needs. Topics to be covered in this one day workshop are irrigation water, post-harvest water, manures and composts, hygiene and an introduction to traceability. Participants will receive a copy of the Advantage Good Agricultural Practices manual plus additional resource materials related to the workshop topics. Please contact me if you are interested in participating in a GAP workshop.

April - there is interest in another **hand on fruit tree pruning workshop**. It is expected that this will occur in the early -mid part of April at a location in Central Manitoulin. Specific details will be made available in the April edition of OMAFRA connects.

Week of June 14th - NEOSCIA will be sponsoring another **crop caravan** throughout north eastern Ontario. Specific farm loca-

tions will be announced at a closer date.

Mike Cowbrough, Weed Management Program Lead - Field Crops/OMAFRA will be the keynote speaker on this tour.

PROVINCIAL EVENTS

March 25th – the Ontario Agri-Food Education Inc. Annual General Meeting

will be held at Country Heritage Park, Milton, ON. For details and registration visit www.oafe.org

March 26 & 27 – Holistic Management Course:

Planned Grazing, Improving Sustainability, Ignatius College, Guelph.

For further information or to register please contact Fran or Tony McQuail, 519-258-2493 ormcqfarm@hurontel.on.ca

March 30 - Strawberry School – Newtonville.

The Ontario Berry Growers Association and OMAFRA are teaming up to provide a 1 day workshop on strawberry production on. Held at the Newtonville Town Hall east of Bowmanville this program will give growers up to date information on strawberry production and marketing. It is well suited to new growers as well as those who would like an update. Space is limited. To pre-register, please contact the Ontario Berry Growers Association at 613-258-4587 or by email at info@ontarioberries.com

March - Profitable Pastures

March 29th: Elmwood; Elmwood Community Centre

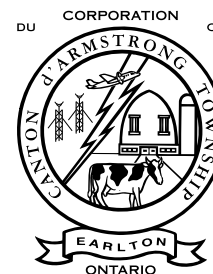
March 30th: Elmvale; Elmvale Community Centre

March 31st: Cobden; Cobden Agricultural Hall

Key Speakers:

- Duane McCartney recently retired from Agriculture Canada in Saskatchewan and Alberta
- Bill Gallagher from Gallagher Animal

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Management Systems

Call 1-877-892-8663 to register by March 26th, \$35 includes a hot roast beef dinner Visa or MasterCard Pre-registration is necessary to ensure dinner.

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UPDATES

Summer jobs service:

The Provincial Government is investing in student employment in Northern Ontario through the **Summer Jobs Service program** delivered by the Ministry of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry. The Summer Jobs Service can help you by providing a \$2.00 per hour hiring incentive to hire young people. You can receive funding of up to a maximum of 560 hours per position, for example, 35 hours per week for 16 weeks at \$2.00 per hour. Subsidized placements must not begin before April 1, 2010 and must not extend past September 30, 2010. There is no minimum number of weeks. Students must be between the ages of 15 and 30

upon commencement of employment. We invite you to participate in the Summer Jobs Service initiative. Application forms can be found on the MNDMF website at www.mndm.gov.on.ca/nordev/summer_jobs_e.asp

OMIF Next Round Begins April 1:

The Ontario Market Investment Fund is now fully-subscribed for the current fiscal year, which ends March 31, 2010. The program will enter its next fiscal year on April 1, 2010. Applications continue to be accepted for projects and will be assessed on a first-come first-served basis. Those who have applications currently with OMAFRA for review will be contacted directly regarding the status of their applications. If you have any questions, please call 1-888-588-4111 or email: omif.omafra@ontario.ca.

Canadian Agricultural Adaptation Program Announced:

The Canadian Agricultural Adaptation Program (CAAP) is a five-year, \$163-million program that aims to help the agriculture, agri-food, and agri-based products sector adapt and remain competitive. The successor to the Advancing

Canadian Agriculture and Agri-Food (ACAAF) program, CAAP will continue to support industry-led initiatives at the national, regional and multi-regional levels. Funding support is available for projects designed to: seize opportunities; respond to new and emerging issues; and path find and pilot solutions to new and ongoing issues. For more information and application forms, visit www.adaptcouncil.org/e/current-programs/caap.php

The Business Management Unit of the Agriculture Development Branch

is pleased to announce the launch of the Business Information Bundle (BIB) for producers Titled: Beyond Production Agriculture which will assist producers who wish to further value-add their product or services. The site is now active and can be accessed at: <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/busdev/valueadd-bib/index.htm>

The BIB was developed as a result of farmers wanting go beyond producing a basic product and add more value to capture new or emerging marketplace opportunities and capture higher returns. The interest in value added agriculture from producers also resulted OMAFRA's partnership with the Canadian Farm Business Management Council to offer the Quest for New Farm Value™ – Value Plus workshop held across the province since 2005. This new website will assist stakeholder access to information for developing a value added product or service through easy-to-use groupings of information and links. It also provides clear information for the producer regarding regulatory requirements and obligations when value



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HIGHLIGHTS in BRIEF

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For Berry (and Vegetable) Growers:

High tunnels provide an opportunity to extend the production season. If you have been thinking about venturing into high tunnel production, read more in "High tunnels extend your season one hoop at a time" now online at <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/crops/hort/news/allontario/ao0110a1.htm>

New Fruit & Vegetable Information on the OMAFRA Crops pages:

For Fruit Growers: The annual task of orchard pruning is about to begin. Your pruning strategy needs to reflect basic pruning principles, but efficiency has become increasingly important as the cost of labour rises. Read more in "Thoughts on Pruning Efficiency", now online at

<http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/crops/updates/soundadvice/jan10r3.htm>

<http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/crops/updates/soundadvice/jan10r3-w.mp3>

AGM of the Algoma Soil & Crop Improvement Association

by Sharon Lane, Regional Correspondent

"Does \$800 per acre income sound appealing to you?" is how Chesley (Ches) Wallace's presentation was advertised for the January 20 meeting of the ASCIA. Ches talked about the opportunities in the maple syrup industry. He gave a few statistics to start his topic. About 84-85% of all maple syrup produced in North America comes from Canada and 80% of that, Quebec produces. Ontario produces only 2-3% and Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, 3%. Maple syrup production is recession proof according to Ches. People are buying more each year and the price is going up. It sells for \$3 to \$325 per pound. However, the "down side" is that it is an expensive business to get into. It costs \$5 to \$10 per tap to set up with plastic piping and stainless steel evaporators.

He made 700 gallons in 2009 on his property on St. Joseph's Island. "Real" syrup has to be 66% and a 4 litre container must weigh 13 pounds to be sold legally. Maple syrup is organic since no herbicides or pesticides are used. Ontario has more maple trees, and they are healthier than Quebec's. Ontario gets double the

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AGM of the Algoma Soil & Crop Improvement Association

continued from page 5

amount of sap per tap as Quebec. Most people in Ontario use vacuum pumps. Ontario has no quota per producer. If producers do not want to refine the sap, they can sell it to those who do and the price is based on sugar content.

Harold Stewart, president of ASCIA, thanked Ches for his witty and informative presentation.

The Awards of Merit at the 2010 AGM were given to Ron Trivers and Larry Ritchie. Will Samis introduced the first recipient. Ron, whose father Len was the first president of the Algoma Soil & Crop Improvement Association and mother Mary was inducted into the Agricultural Hall of Fame, returned to Algoma in 1977 to farm at Iron Bridge after obtaining a degree in agriculture from MacDonald College at McGill and teaching for a number of years. Many will remember Trivers' corn from his farm that he tile drained and limed with 500 tons of lime. While farming, Ron taught environmental science in Sault Ste. Marie, became a member of the Algoma Cattlemen, the Algoma Community Pasture Association and helped resurrect the Algoma Soil and Crop Improvement Association of which he was president for three years.

Ron in his acceptance speech said that he owed a lot to his parents who set a good example in their community service. Ron mentioned that his success in farming was a team effort with his wife

Lynda, son Brad and daughter Christine. He honoured past members and workers of the Soil and Crop Association. In 1999, there were six members and today, there are 80.

Sandy Ross introduced Larry Ritchie of Peel County, a former Agricultural Representative for Algoma from 1984 to 1988. His style of "Town Hall" meetings and his enthusiasm encouraged Algoma farmers. According to Sandy, many Algoma farmers feel that his time here was the "golden years" of agriculture in Algoma.

Larry, in response to Sandy's introduction, said that he had a long history with the Trivers family, as he and Colin Trivers, Ron's brother, were classmates at Ontario Agricultural College. Of his 30-year career, he said that the highlight was the four years that he spent in Algoma.

Mike Cowbrough, Weed Management Field Crops Program Lead out of the Guelph OMAFRA office, was the next speaker. According to Mike, to manage a weed, the weed has to be identified and then some method of managing it must be found. If a farmer has a plant that he can't identify, he can go to m.weedinfo.ca. He can then put in a word that most identifies the plant. For example, for a plant that creeps along the ground, "creeper" could be used. Golden creeper (*Thladiatha dubia*) comes up. According to Mike, a picture could also be submitted.

The website after identifying the plant gives ways to manage it. One of the problem plants the members gave is tansy, which is persistent, has a good root system but limited seed production. A non-chemical solution might be to cut off the top growth and a chemical one, would be to spray when in full bloom. If people are having trouble with spring cereal crops (corn or wheat), Mike recommended the website m.weedpro75.com which will select a

herbicide for that weed. Steps at this site are select a crop, select a weed and the website will give the herbicide. Mike reminded farmers that some problem plants can be controlled by the correct pH and drainage of the soil. Examples of these are horsetail and buttercups.

Mack Emiry, Regional Director for OSCIA, gave his report. There are grants available for test plots for bedstraw control in Algoma and Temiskaming. Ten or so farmers are need to calculate carbon saving using the greenhouse carbon gas calculator. Mack informed the group of the following resolutions from NEOSCIA to OSCIA:

Resolution 1. Request to the MNR for a Sandhill Crane (*Grus canadensis*) huntingseason because of crop damage and the increase in population.

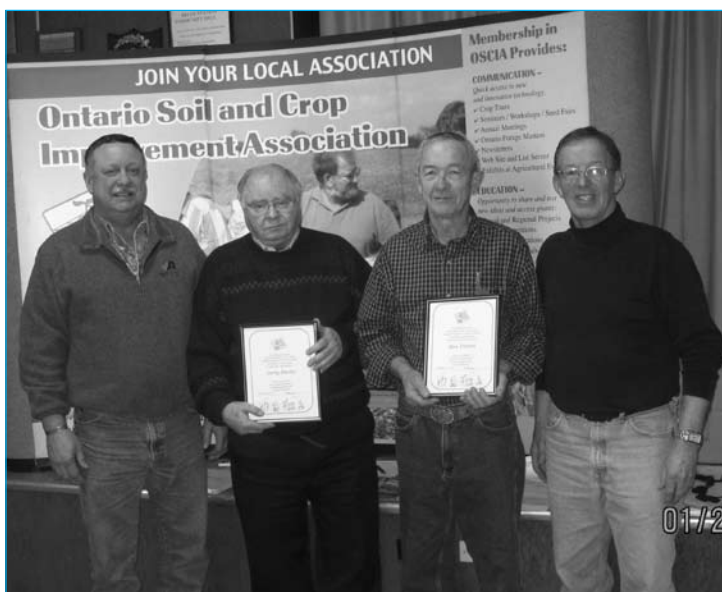
Resolution 2. Request the Ontario government to expand funding to the Ontario farmers for Farm Environmental Funding because farmers need and want to protect the environment but lack the finances to do so.

Resolution 3. Encourage the government of Canada to have policies to discourage non-indigenous plants by having goods imported under the same rules and regulations as those grown here.

Dave Trivers mentioned that the MNR Stewardship program under Tracey Cooke has several projects planned: a Green Expo on July 23 and 24 that will feature local food; Species at Risk project; the Blue Algae problem at Desbarats and Bright lakes as to the source and solution; and preparing a Sault Ste. Marie and area food guide.

Ross MacLeod from the Sault Ste. Marie Innovation Centre reported that they are looking at using the solid waste from St. Mary's Paper in soil. Hemp and flax trials will continue.

The meeting closed with the election of directors: Les Hillstom and Pat Taylor as directors for ASCIA; Paul Hillstom, director to NEOSCIA; Ray Prestedge to OSCIA; and Les Hillstom, Vet Committee.



Sandy Ross, area farmer; Recipient s of Award Larry Ritchie, former Ag. Rep. & Ron Trivers, retired Algoma farmer; Will Samis, member of ASCIA

AGM of the Algoma Community Pasture

by Sharon Lane, Regional Correspondent to Breaking Ground

Will Samis called the Annual General Meeting of the Algoma Community Pasture for 2010 held Feb. 2 at the Algoma Social Services Building in Little Rapids to order.

Brian Bell from the Gore Bay OMAFRA office presented statistics he gathered on the Billings Stocker Pasture on Manitoulin Island. He collected data on weight on/off, Body Condition (BCS), frame, and main breed type for the 325 cattle grazed on 600 acres of pasture for 110 to 115

days per year from 1999 to 2006. The trends he found are as follows: steers had a higher Average Daily Gain (ADG) than heifers, frame had no affect on gain, Body Condition Structure (BCS) had no affect on gain, and British-based cattle had higher ADG than exotic breeds. Heavier weight British cattle had a higher ADG than lighter weight British cattle on this pasture. Charolais cattle had a higher ADG than other exotic breeds. The ADG was higher for a "typical" Manitoulin year than a season with 1/3 more rainfall.

Dave Lewington, national vice-president of the National Farmers Union, presented material of interest to beef farmers. At this time, round-up ready alfalfa is under study by the US Environmental Impact (EIS) to see if it has an impact on the environment. If it is deemed to have an impact, then Canada will probably follow the US lead. The European Union (EU) will not buy seed that is not organic, so Dave recommends that all seed needs to be tested.

Dave explained that according to the Animal Health Act those farmers whose animals are culled because they are suspected of carrying diseases might not be compensated. Dave mentions one other problem facing farmers is that local abattoirs are forced to close because they cannot meet the expenses that the new regulations require. In some cases, it is in

excess of \$165 000. This is dangerous for the autonomy of the small, local farmer. Larger packinghouses like Cargill will have more control over the supply and price. The National Farmers Union is pushing to have "captive supplies" banned in Canada and the U.S.

Ron Bonnett, first vice-president of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, spoke to the need for the beef industry to have both a domestic and an export market. He said that the CFA tries to bring all the players – producers, packers, and buyers- to the table for discussion. Competitiveness makes sure that regulations don't put Canada at a disadvantage. In Canada, we have packaging regulations whereas in Europe there are none.

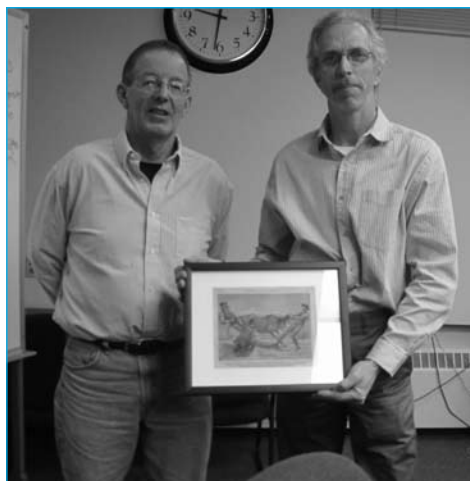
He mentioned that when there is a banned put on Canadian products, it takes too long for a response team to be put in place because there are too many departments for us to respond quickly.

According to Ron, for the domestic market, Canada needs a "grown-in Canada" label and then marketing for this product.


CFA looks at the issues and solutions with broad-based support and works towards a consensus with the cattlemen and the packers.

Will Samis wondered if there would be any farmers in the future since 60% of

continued on page 22



Will Samis, president of Algoma Community Pasture, presenting guest speaker, Max Burt, of Manitoulin with a token of appreciation.



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Temiskaming Soil & Crop Improvement Association

N.E. Ontario Wheat Growers

Temiskaming Grain Growers

SUPPORTING TEMISKAMING FARMERS

Janet Parsons, President of NEOSCA, Presentation on Chile at AGM of NOAFEM in Sudbury

by Sharon Lane, Regional Correspondent to Breaking Ground



Janet with globe, Chilean wine, & products from Chile.

Janet Parsons and her husband, John, spent November of 2009 in South America visiting Chile, Argentina and Uruguay. They flew into Santiago, the largest city in Chile. Chile is approximately 4300 kms long but only 150 wide. It borders on Peru, Bolivia and Argentina. Its fertile land is a central plain between the coastal mountains and the Andes. It is predominately an agricultural country. Travelling about the country on buses is easy.

Pedro de Valdivia conquered Chile for Spain in 1541 and, thus, Spanish is the language used. English is limited. Chilean villages and cities are modelled after the Spanish idea of town squares where the main buildings are around a square. The square is more or less "green space" where the people congregate. In some of the town squares, people have put buggies or carts made from bicycle parts for the children to ride on. The siesta is still observed, but the shops are open late into the evening.

The Canada dollar is worth about 500 Chilean pesos. The Parsons found it very difficult to get used to the large amount of money that things cost in pesos.

Because the Chileans have four growing seasons, the attitude that they can do it tomorrow is prevalent and is a drawback to

progress.

Some of the tempting food and drinks that the Parsons tried were complete Italian (hot dog with the "works") fish soup, beef with potatoes, fresh vegetables and fruits, a cheap wine with vanilla ice cream, pisco sours (pisco, lemon or lime juice, egg whites, syrup and bitters) and Chilean wine.

Janet noticed that city subways often had murals promoting agriculture. Chileans are very proud of their agriculture. They have fairs and expositions just as we do with snack foods, kid's games and often showcase their indigenous people as we do our aboriginals.

Agrotourism is being promoted, especially in the wine industry. A four-hour tour that visits two vineyards cost about \$100. Ten to fifteen vintners will cooperate and arrange to have two or more wineries available for each tour.

Recently, many foreigners are coming in to buy up the land and develop industries. Dole has set up fruit canning plants. Many farmers have converted from grain crops to grapes, blueberries and peaches for export, and farmers now have to import grain. Janet noted that Chile's dairy industry is not as developed as Uruguay's as farmers seem to be using milking machines but the milk goes into a milk can instead of a central stainless steel tank.

There is a great deal of inequality in wages especially after the military dictatorship of Pinochet. A manager might earn a hundred times more wages than a secretary might.

The Parsons also visited the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Valparaiso and Mendoza, Argentina, the wine area that produces 80% of Argentina's wine.

Janet had many interesting pictures during her presentation of her trip to South America. Janet told us that according to The Lonely Planet, Chile and Uruguay were the safest South American countries to visit. Janet showed many interesting pictures of her South American holiday and some of the products that Canadians can get from Chile.

AGM of the Algoma Community Pasture

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beef farmers under 35 have quit. Ron Bonnett replied that there would be if they take advantage of modern technology. Dave Lewington wasn't so sure. He thinks that the farmer is getting tired of losing money each year. However, there are some small operators who are specializing in organic or speciality crops.

Brian Bell introduced the guest speaker for the evening, Max Burt. The Burt Farm run by Joanna and Max raises turkeys, pigs and cattle; produces maple syrup and makes sausage, pepperoni and jerky. Max thinks the government is doing a great job of convincing people to "eat local" but has "down-loaded" the cost for all the new testing on the farmer. The farmer has to buy equipment to constantly test his produce even if all his products have tested negatively for pathogens when tested by the government departments. Max's philosophy on farming can be summed-up as a healthy farm is self-sufficient. To prove this theory, he has even produce bio-diesel fuel from fat from his butchered cattle to run his tractor. He feels that farmers can't always talk about economics. Will Samis thanked Max for his frank, interesting talk of his farming practices.

The meeting proceeded with the treasurer's financial statement. Dave Wolgemuth reported that in 2009, 162 cattle were pasture for 117 days and gained 160 lbs. per acre. No fertilizer is added to the pasture. Six cattle were treated for pink eye and foot rot.

Two new directors, Colin Trivers and Dennis Kirby, were selected for a three-year term. In new business, a motion was entertained for the directors to investigate the government's Incentive Plan for Alternative Energy possibly placing a roof over the work area and placing solar panels on it to generate power.

The Algoma Community Pasture members would like to thank Algoma District Social Services for its generous use of its build for their annual meeting.

Muskoka Lime Trial Project

Muskoka SCIA Major Project (Interim Report)

Purpose:

The objectives of the trial were to examine

1) whether higher than recommended rates could maintain target soil pH levels longer; 2) effects of levels of lime on soil nutrients, organic matter, crop yields and quality and; 3) effects of applying limestone at lower than recommended rates. This document reports the results after 5 years. The trial will continue for another 2 years to determine long term effects.

Across most of the Laurentian Shield, and particularly in Muskoka, agricultural soils are acidic and must be limed on a regular basis to achieve optimum crop growth and yields. While recommended lime rates have been generally effective in raising the soil pH to target levels, farmers have found that the effect of lime is short-lived, and repeat applications are needed after a few years. Others were concerned that recommended rates were too high and wished to test the effectiveness of lower rates.

A long term trial was set up in 2005 in which different time rates were applied in replicated trials on 6 farms in Muskoka. A Major Grant in 2005 funded part of the costs for limestone, trucking and soil analyses, with all Grant funds accounted for in the 2006 report to OSCIA. Initial results are found in Crop Advances: Field Project Reports, Vol 2, Feb 2006. OMAFRA/OSCIA. Pp 105-107

Methods:

Farmers' field plots ranged from 0.2 to 1ha. A baseline soil test was made in 2005 before lime was applied. Samples were analyzed at Agri-food Laboratories, using a Basic III set of tests before lime was applied, and again in 2009, with Basic I test in the other years.

Table 1. Initial status of sites in Muskoka Lime Trail - 2005

Site	Farm	Soil Texture	Prior Lime (yrs.)	pH	CEC MEQ /100g	Lime Recommended t/ha
1	Springfield	sandy loam	5	6.3	8	3
2	Brooklands	Sandy loam	10+	6.3	9	4
3	Mallard	Sandy	12	5.6	9.5 (37?)	6
4	Grenville	Silt-loam	Hor. lime at seeding	5.9	17	7
5	Pearcey	Clay-sandy	none	5.8	20	7
6	Quinton	Clay -loam	none	5.3	22.2	15

Four farmers applied lime at recommended, 1.5 times and 2 times recommended rates. Two farmers applied lime at lower than recommended rates, ranging from 15% to 100% of recommended lime.

Although, for ethical reasons, farmers were not asked to include a zero lime control, two farmers did include a zero control in their trials. Calcitic limestone with an Ag index of 70 was applied in fall 2005 or spring 2006 at all sites, using lime spreaders (3 sites) or with the lime evenly placed over manure in manure spreaders (3 sites). Lime was immediately incorporated using discs at all sites.

Effect of Lime on Yield and Quality

Yield was assessed by visual comparison and counting bales of hay from each plot. Final yield figures from some sites are not yet available. At Brooklands farm a large reduction in strawberry yield and quality was noted visually on the unlimed plot in 2009, when pH had dropped to 5.8. The yields of square bales of hay from Spring field farms are shown in figure 15.

While increased yields in each successive year are found, this effect may be due to favourable weather in later years, rather than to the application of lime.

Summary:

Soil test lime recommendation best at all sites, except site 6 (clay with high CEC), where lower rates (50-75% of recommended) are best. Recommended rate can maintain target pH for at least 4 years (at 5 of the 6 sites). Higher than recommended rates resulted in excessive Ca saturation, possibly displacing other soil nutrients. Marginally reduced nutrient levels with lime were found at the sandy soil (low CEC) site. Dolomitic lime with higher Mg content would be more effective to correct both low soil pH and low Mg. Alternative soils amendments, manure or fertilizer may be needed to improve available nutrients. As locally produced wood ash is available in Muskoka, the use of wood ash to correct both soil pH and low nutrient levels should be explored. A final soil test, to be taken 6 years after liming is planned, to examine long term liming effects on Muskoka soils. If funds permit tissue tests for micro-nutrient changes will be included.

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Project Contacts:

K. W. Riley, Muskoka Soil and Crop Improvement Association. <http://www.muskokafarmfresh.com>

A complete report can be found at <http://www.ontariosoilcrop.org/cropadvances.htm>

THE MICROFIT PROGRAM

by Kelly Bird, NEOSCIA Intern

On October 1, 2009, Ontario Power Authority (OPA) announced their Ontario microFIT green energy program; micro meaning a 10 kilowatt system or less, and FIT standing for 'Feed in Tariff'. This new green energy program has the potential to be extremely beneficial for any farmer, home owner, or small business owner. Why you may ask? The microFIT programs, allows a home owner to place their own environmental energy project on their property to feed directly into the Ontario grid. In doing so one is not only helping the environment by producing green energy, but more importantly, one will be making extra earnings. With this project, any land owner, with an electricity meter on their property, can sign a twenty year, fixed contract, with OPA to receive 80.2 cents a kilowatt; this works out to be anywhere between \$10 000-\$17 000 extra earnings a year, depending on your location and energy project.

One of the more popular choices of microFIT energy projects is installing solar panels. Solar panels have the potential to be placed on roofs, pastures, backyards, or where ever sun light is able to come in contact with the panel. Keep in mind during the winter, the panels do not produce as much electricity, but the rest of the year makes them extremely worth while.

In addition, solar panels are very expensive to purchase, but, there are more expensive green energy projects to dive into, for example wind turbines. Thus, one is looking at a six year period of time before the solar panel is completely paid off; this estimate is coming from the direct profits made from the solar panel system. However, there is another fourteen years to turn an additional income.

The main push for OPA's energy project is to develop new jobs and increase the economy within Ontario and on larger scale Canada. It is very important to note that Ontario uses more electricity per capita then anywhere else in the world. Therefore, to be able to reap the benefits of microFIT program, forty per cent of the entire solar panel system must be made in Ontario; this number will increase to sixty per cent within the next year.

When looking for the perfect solar panel system and installation process, look for warranties, and clearly, the longer the warranty, the better off you are. In addition, only one 10 kilowatt system is allowed per civic address. If you are interested in taking on your own, solar panel, energy project adventure, first thing is first, get yourself into the 'Q' by going to <http://microfit.powerauthority.on.ca/sign-up-pre.php>.



This month's artwork comes from Justin Burre of Englebart. View more of his work at <http://justin-burry.tripod.com>