

National Soil Conservation Week 2010

Saint-André, NB: The Eastern Canada Soil and Water Conservation Centre (ECSWCC) wishes to acknowledge **National Soil Conservation Week April 18-24**. This event is recognized each year by national and provincial soil conservation groups and grass root farm organizations.

The National Soil Conservation Week was first proclaimed in 1985 as a way of increasing public awareness about soil conservation issues. This event was the result of one of the recommendations from the Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry's "Soils at Risk" report to examine soil degradation concerns throughout Canada. The Honorable Herb Sparrow chaired this committee which concluded that there was an urgent need to develop programs to promote soil and water conservation practices across Canada.

Atlantic agricultural soils are subject to soil degradation through loss of soil organic matter, soil compaction, erosion by water and with agricultural runoff. The net consequence is a loss of soil productivity. Soil erosion and degradation are being addressed through better crop rotations, conservation tillage, residue management, and winter cover cropping. In more complex topographic conditions, integrated soil erosion control systems such as diversion terraces combined with alternate strip cropping and grassed waterways have been effective in decreasing the incidence of rill and gully erosion. These soil conservation practices may also increase carbon sequestration in soils, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and provide other environmental benefits.

According to Jean-Louis Daigle, Executive Director of the ECSWCC, "While the adoption of soil conservation practices has been challenging due to market pressures, farming efficiency, land tenure and land availability issues, producers are becoming increasingly involved in adopting agronomically, economically and environmentally sound and sustainable production systems". It must be emphasized that Society in general must start looking at new approaches and to encourage land stewardship programs such as Environmental Goods and Services programs concepts or initiatives such as the ALUS program in PEI.

"Soil health and soil conservation are the foundation of life on earth and for agriculture to produce crops and healthy food in a sustainable manner. It is also important that we take this opportunity during the National Soil Conservation Week to tell the general public of what farmers are doing in terms of best management practices and that we need to have sound government policies and programs in place to help the agricultural sector to help maintain and protect these valuable resources" said Eugene Legge, chairman of the Eastern Canada Soil & Water Conservation Centre Advisory Board.

"The Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) is becoming one of the key "Tools for Change" in agriculture to promote soil and water conservation" according to Maarten van Oord, member of the Centre's Advisory Board. "Farmers in Atlantic Canada have been among the leaders across the country in initiating environmental farm plans, especially with the use of the new computerized version." In addition, he stresses the importance of the role Agri-environment

Clubs play in promoting best management practices and in providing technical support to producer groups.

Soil management and conservation are essential elements and the foundation of sound sustainable development in agriculture. The Centre takes this opportunity to encourage you to visit our Centre's website which has valuable information on environmental farm planning, best management practices, agroforestry, recent project reports on NB Ecological Goods and Services (EG&S) project and a White Paper on an Agricultural Riparian Health and Management Strategy for Atlantic Canada.

Please visit the ECSWCC web site www.ccse-swcc.nb.ca and the Soil Conservation Council of Canada web site at www.soilcc.ca during the 2010 National Soil Conservation Week to examine the soil and water conservation and best management practices information.

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