

GRAIN PRODUCER

Rob Florence

Rob Florence farms 2600 acres just east of North Battleford, where his wife Wendy works as a teacher. A farmer for close to 30 years, Rob has been especially conscious of the environment since he built a new house in the yard in the 1980's. "There were a lot of old cattle pens and barns and manure piles," he recalls, "and we wanted to get into grain farming, so we had to do a big cleanup. Since then we've just been pretty vigilant about keeping things as neat and tidy as we can."

Early in 2006 he saw an ad in the Western Producer about an Environmental Farm Plan. Along with about 15 other farmers, he and Wendy attended an information meeting, where he was intrigued by the opportunity to "qualify and quantify" his management practices. "We had records here and records there," he explains, "but it wasn't organized very well. This was a chance to get everything together in one spot."

What is the Environmental Farm Plan (EFP)?

The EFP helps farm owners and operators examine their operation for environmental sustainability. Designed as an educational tool, the program is voluntary and confidential, and open to any producer interested in understanding and addressing environmental issues in agriculture, and on their own farms.

In Saskatchewan the EFP is delivered by the Provincial Council of Agricultural Development and Diversification Boards (PCAB). The EFP's five-step process helps producers understand the environmental impact of their current practices, and assess how these practices may affect their farming operation now and in the future. Trained facilitators introduce the concepts and work with producers to help them assess the soil and site characteristics of their operation. At home, participants use a workbook to identify potential environmental risks and possible solutions. After completing the workbook assessment, participants attend a second workshop to finalize a plan of action and prioritize the steps they need to take to resolve the risks.



Each completed action plan is then sent to a peer review committee for endorsement. Once the committee has endorsed the plan, the producer receives a Certificate of Endorsement from PCAB and becomes eligible to apply for cost-shared funding through the Canada-Saskatchewan Farm Stewardship Program (CSFSP).

One step at a time

At the workshop, Rob identified a number of possible problems right in his yard: fuel storage; fertilizer and chemical storage; a couple of old, unused wells; the surface drainage pattern in relation to their current water supply. He found the manual thought-provoking, and was prompted at least once to call his municipal councillor about problems he thought should be addressed.

In implementing his Environmental Farm Plan, Rob is taking a systematic approach. "Our margins are so thin on the farm right now that we really can't afford to do something that's going to cost us more money," he explains. "We identified areas where we could save money ourselves, that would benefit the environment. Those we gave the highest priority." Next on the list were projects that would have a "neutral" effect on his

Saskatchewan Environmental Farm Plan Testimonials

continued

cash flow—and lastly, projects that would benefit the environment but which would cost him money. All in all, he says, he has enough to keep him busy “for the next ten years.”

Rob plans to apply for CSFSP shared-cost funding soon. “I’ve got the form made out for some epoxy-lined fertilizer bins,” he says. His plans include a safer base, such as a concrete pad, to make it easier to clean up any spills.

Meanwhile, the Florences have started some EFP projects they can do on their own. “We’ve started to change our environmental practices just from what we’ve learned from the manual,” Rob says. “I think it’s a great program.”



ENVIRONMENTAL FARM PLAN

EFP

Sustainable Futures

Provincial Council of Agriculture Development and Diversification Boards for Saskatchewan Inc. (PCAB) is an independent non-profit organization representing grassroots agriculture in Saskatchewan. We work closely with industry and government to ensure timely and effective delivery of agriculture programs in the province. PCAB is committed to working with both government and industry to ensure a cooperative, efficient approach to agricultural program delivery.

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