

BEEF CATTLE

Deloris & John Hawkins

For over thirty years Deloris and John Hawkins have operated Lazy H Farm near Maymont. The Hawkins' raise both purebred and commercial Angus, and a decade ago added a Maine-Anjou line to their herd.

Prompted by their own respect for the land that sustains them, and by the demands of the terrain, Deloris and John have always taken a proactive approach to environmentally sustainable agriculture. They installed cross-fencing during the drought years of 2000 to 2004, and recently began stabilizing areas hard-hit by wind and water erosion. "One quarter has a steep slope from south to northwest," Deloris explains. "If we have a lot of spring runoff, or heavy spring rains, there can be some pretty bad water runs."

They've also tried to keep their cattle away from the creek that runs through the pasture. "We had used a gas pump and went to the pasture every day to pump a trough full of water," Deloris says. "This helped, but wasn't ideal." When the cattle drank the trough dry, they went back to the creek until Deloris or John returned to pump more water--and, as Deloris points out, moving the trough and pump from pasture to pasture was awkward, heavy work.

The Hawkins' were well aware of what needed to be done. Projects on their wish list included installing more cross fencing and sowing more fragile land down to grass. They also wanted to switch to a better watering system. A portable solar water system, Deloris says, would be better for the cattle's health, and better for the creek and the bank area. "We just never had the extra cash to implement some of these changes." The portable solar water system, she notes, is over \$6,000.

When the Hawkins' heard about the Environmental Farm Plan they were immediately interested, especially when they discovered it could open the door to cost-shared funding through the Canada-Saskatchewan Farm Stewardship Program (CSFSP).



What is the Environmental Farm Plan (EFP)?

Completely voluntary and confidential, the EFP is an educational tool designed to help farm owners and operators understand and address 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).

Participants first attend a workshop, where trained facilitators explain the concepts, and introduce the five-step self-assessment process. Later, at home, participants record the soil and site characteristics of their operation in a workbook provided by PCAB, and note the details of their current farming practices. Next, using the information in the workbook, they determine the current and future impact of these practices on the environment, identify potential environmental risks and draft a plan to address those risks. When they've completed the workbook, participants attend a second workshop to finalize their action plan, and to prioritize the steps they've chosen to take.

Each completed action plan is then sent to a peer review committee. 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 CSFSP for help in implementing aspects of the plan.

continued

Projects underway

At Agribition, Deloris ran into Tamara Weir-Shields, now the EFP's Program Coordinator but then an EFP workshop facilitator for the Maymont area. "Since I knew Tamara, and trusted and respected her," Deloris recalls, "I asked her to call me when she had a meeting planned in our area."

Deloris and John both attended the workshop in the summer of 2006. Since then, they've completed an Environmental Farm Plan for the Lazy H and, equipped with their Certificate of Endorsement from PCAB, have applied for funding support to cross a few more items off the list. They intend to continue stabilizing the soil in the erosion-prone quarter section, and to go ahead with the solar-powered watering system.

Deloris expresses a strong desire to see the program continue. "A lot of farmers are just becoming aware of what the EFP is," she says. So much could still be done to benefit the environment, but when farmers are already doing the best they can, funding support is vital. With an Environmental Farm Plan, Deloris believes, farmers can become better stewards of the land, and more productive, too.



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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