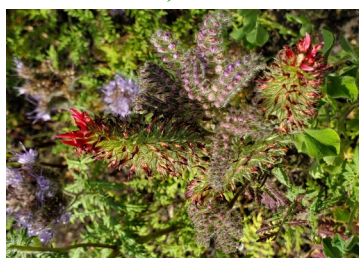


2021

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Lakeland Agricultural Research Association



The Verdant Element

FROM SAND TO SOIL

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Another year has come and gone. Although this year has presented many challenges, we can be thankful that we are not farming in places such as Abbotsford BC where floods have all but washed away farms. Along with the hardships of 2021, it is important to take time to recognize the (little or big) successes that happened during the year. A personal win for me was the completion of my masters degree. For my degree I studied the effects of regenerative agricultural practices on the overall water balance by using the Cold Regions Hydrologic Model (CRHM). The conclusion was that by incorporating regenerative agriculture practices (intercropping was the focus of my research) resulted in greater snow water equivalent (more water available from the snow), decreased evaporation, greater wetland storage, increased infiltration and less runoff. So on a year like this past one, there would have been more water available to your plants for longer in the season resulting in a greater resilience and productivity on your operation. Putting this into practice, this past year I planted a pollinator cover crop. By no means was it amazing, as like every other crop out there became limited due to water and heat stress. However, I have incredibly sandy soil, of which when digging down showed how much carbon this diverse crop put into the soil (check out the photo on the last page). I planted trees this year as well (in late June), and there was a vast difference between planting where last years cover crop was to just a grass mix location 100 metres away. The pure grass stand was like concrete and dry, versus the cover crop which had better aggregation and was moist, holding water from the spring still. There was a noticeable difference to how the trees faired over the summer as well, as the available moisture and nutrients beneath the cover crop gave those trees a head start. Adding a diversity of species back across the

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LARA Watershed Resiliency and Restoration Program

Watersheds are unique, come in many shapes and sizes and can cross many different land uses. The simple definition of a watershed is the area of land that catches precipitation, and drains into a wetland, stream, river or groundwater. The riparian zone is the interface between the upland and a water course. This area is heavily influenced by water, how and where it flows and is reflected in the plants, soil characteristics and wildlife that are found there. Riparian areas have a large role in water quality, quantity and biodiversity. They provide eight key functions to: trap and store sediment; build and maintain banks and shorelines; store water; recharge aquifers; filter and buffer water; reduce and dissipate energy; create primary production; and maintain biodiversity by providing habitat for plants, wildlife and fish. These Ecological Services benefit people, other living organisms, and the overall functioning of interconnected natural systems within watersheds. Conservation and restoration of wetlands and riparian areas in Alberta are needed for sustainably functioning watersheds.

LARA has available funding ending December of 2022 for: offsite watering systems, riparian fencing, water-course crossings, and wetland enhancements such as pond levelers, exclusion fencing and riparian plantings. So apply for your projects as soon as possible.

Forms and information for the program are available online at: <http://www.laraonline.ca/farming-resources/environmental/funding-opportunities/> Or by emailing sustainag@laraonline.ca

Someday Is Not A Day On My Calendar

By Elaine Froese <https://elainefroese.com/2021/11/18/someday-is-not-a-day-on-my-calendar-2/>

I'm sure you may have heard a farmer say, "Someday this farm will be his", or "Someday we will get to the lawyer's office, but we have work to do!" My sister Barbara Edie wrote the headline "someday is not a day on my calendar" when she relayed the memories of an active 1988 spent with my other sister Grace who died tragically that year at the hands of a drunk driver on November 13th.

Barb's resolve was to never put things off, and not let "someday" creep into her thinking.

Folks on the farm hope to take time off "someday!"

The word procrastinate is formed from two Latin words – pro, meaning 'forward', and crastinus, meaning 'belonging to tomorrow'. So, procrastination is the act of putting something into tomorrow and, of course, it suggests that it is always 'in tomorrow' – so never gets done. (Hugh Culver, author of *Stop Procrastinating Today*)

Why do we put things off, special family times that we know only have a certain window of opportunity? Why delay plans to make our farm businesses healthier?

My speaker friend Pierrette Desrosiers says that there are 5 main causes of procrastination.

1. A lack of planning and vision.
2. Perfectionism
3. A rebellious spirit.
4. A quest for adrenaline, liking to work under pressure.
5. Don't like doing a particular task, acting like a "spoiled child".

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My speaker friend Hugh Culver, believes “You are not a procrastinator”, you always get more of what you focus on. He calls us to re-frame our decision-making, and start developing better decision-making habits.

In farm families, I sense there is a huge sense of overwhelm, so people get stressed and just shut down. When I show up as a coach we work to make an action plan that is realistic, to consider the steps along the way. For example, you know you need to update your will. The first step, find the old copy. The second step, call the lawyer for a first appointment. The third step, talk to your spouse and then book a time to converse with your family. Now is a good time to have some of these important conversations after family suppers.

Focus and execute was a mantra that caught my eye and has become a common expression for me. To establish a plan you need to think about what goals you want to reach. Break things down into steps, and work out the timelines for execution. Deadlines work for me, if I post them in my computer calendar, I can keep them top of mind, and move them along. The reward for me as a writer to meet deadlines is that I get paid! What rewards can you build into the projects that you are avoiding?

One summer the junkie steel, augers, etc., needed to be removed from our bush. Wes encouraged all the employees to participate in the load the flat deck project. Each employee’s reward for this “not so fun” cleaning job was to have the money from their load, a little added incentive not to keep stashing old equipment in the trees.

Someday is not a day on my calendar...

Take the first step. Make the phone call for an appointment with the painter, lawyer, carpenter, plumber, doctor, etc. Moving it out of your brain and starting to take action will beget more action.

Decide to let go of perfection and just start the project. Weight loss is a classic procrastination issue, and farmers who are riding equipment, eating Saskatoon pie with lots of ice cream, and avoiding their doctors can relate to feeling bad about not dealing with their health.

Culver suggests that each decision is either doing or avoiding, much like a scale. I am stepping on the scale, so I know my weight is not good, but what I am avoiding is tracking my portions. I also should be avoiding pie with ice cream!

“SHOULD.” Counselors use a term “don’t should on yourself”. Rather than saying, “I should talk to my son and his wife about their vision for this farm”, say “I am going to start having conversations about what is working for our family farm team, and what needs to change.”

Think about what time of day you have the best energy to do the hard work. As a writer, I like to have a 2-hour block of quiet time in the mornings. Once I get “in the zone”, I don’t answer the pings of my texts or the phone. What would it look like if you took 90 minutes this morning to tackle a tough project that you have been putting off?

Would it help to have a buddy? Our seed plant office had a lot of mud one spring after 8 inches of rain and lots of traffic. When I started to try to find the floor, it did my spirit and energy level a lot of good to have a cleaning buddy. My mom always used to say “many hands make light work.” Sometimes the work we are avoiding may be more fun with a team approach. I haven’t been able to convince my family on this one with weeding the garden, but start that kind of training with young children and you may have better results than I did!

Stephen Covey wrote about doing the urgent things, not the important things. Take some time to develop a “rallying cry” to getting things done.

**Have fun with your family this winter.
Don’t put that off!**



Environmental Farm Plans

The environment is becoming a more prominent issue. It is a large factor in marketing agriculture and food products in today's global markets. Consumers are demanding more transparency and are demanding high quality and safe products. Reputation of food safety is critical to retain and gain access to domestic and international markets.

Environmental Farm Plans (EFP) provide a tool for producers to self analyze their operation and identify environmental risks, current standards, areas for improvement and also highlight what they are doing well. Having a completed EFP allows producers to access different funding opportunities, such as the Growing Forward Stewardship Program. It is also useful in product branding that demonstrates specific environmental standards.

The EFP Process

An EFP can be completed through workshops, online or one-on-one session(s). The EFP first identifies the soil and farm site characteristics. Following this, the producer completes only the relevant chapters that apply to their operation; such as wintering sites, fertilizer, pesticides, crop management etc.

Upon completion the EFP is submitted to a Technical Assistant for review. Once reviewed the EFP will be returned along with a letter of completion.

The EFP is a living document and should be reviewed and updated periodically.

If you wish to complete an EFP or have any questions regarding EFP please contact Kellie at the LARA office at 780-826-7260

Riparian Health Assessment

The riparian zone is the interface between the upland and a water course. A healthy riparian area: traps and stores sediment; builds and maintains banks and shorelines; stores water; recharges aquifers; filters and buffers water; creates primary production and much more! A riparian health assessment is a tool designed to evaluate the site and can provide a foundation to build an action plan and identify priorities.

If you would like a FREE Riparian Health Assessment conducted on your property or more information please call Kellie at 780-826-7260 or email sustainag.lara@mcsnet.ca



Recovering Your Operation After Drought

This past year has posed numerous challenges with the heat and lack of moisture. Pastures and haylands suffered, as feed resources were required to sustain herds during the growing season and as we head into winter feeding season. There are a few strategies you can take to help put your operation into a better position for next year and make a few reparations to your lands.

Many pastures looked a bit like golf greens by the time the fall came around. As well, hayfields seemed a bit sparse and crispy before a few rains in September. One way to help these lands make a comeback next year is to bale graze on them. Bale grazing adds back nutrients through the animal waste that will be applied and spread for you during the winter season. The feed residue also helps add back organic matter that your soils desperately lacked this fall. Also the bales will contain some seeds that can help establish back plants that may have died off due to the drought and heat. Previous research by LARA (2006-2007) found that forage production in an old hayfield was five times higher the following summer following bale grazing, than on the same field where there was no bale grazing. Another benefit to bale grazing is the reduced costs by decreasing equipment use, feed handling and manure hauling.



Photo: This was taken on the holistic grazing bus tour in 2018. The fence separates a field (on the right) that was bale grazed and (on the left) one that there was no bale grazing on. The producers (Chuko's) noticed a greater diversity of plants and healthier pastures. Their plan was to bale graze both fields the following winter,. Bale grazing has been a great asset to their operation and increased productivity on their pastures.

Another regenerative approach you can take is to include a different variety of seeds into your herds' mineral and have them seed it for you. Try to use seeds with a heavier seed coat such as vetch, but there are a lot of species that you can include and have your livestock spread the seed for you.

As for your water sources... Dugouts suffered the most this year and as they were really low it would be a great time to assess them. Sloughing banks are accessible and could be cleaned out. Make sure to move the spoil pile at least 6 meters back, or better yet, spread out the fill and ensure that vegetation is established in the spring to prevent erosion and create a filter to help maintain water quality. Sediments in your dugout contain a lot of nutrients, which is the driver of things like algae and cyanobacteria (blue green algae). Cleaning these out periodically can help ensure better water quality and increase the longevity of your water source. Providing an offsite watering system and limiting the access to your dugout by your livestock also has a huge impact. Clean water increases cattle gains, which means more money in your pocket. And this last summer as dugouts dried up, water quality is greatly impacted by having a buffer to prevent nutrient concentration in your water. Check out the Canadian Agricultural Partnerships or the LARAWRRP program for funding for offsite watering systems and fencing.



Connect for Food (CFF)

is an initiative developed with the purpose to identify and create opportunities for people and businesses with interest in the local food economy. We believe everyone connects with food and has ideas and experiences to share to contribute to a strong local food system. Connect for Food wants to listen and learn from **you**.



"Connecting For Food" will launch early in 2022 with a series of events, providing an opportunity for people with a stake in the local food system to give their input. Your input will support economic development and improve community vitality through our connection with food.

The 'Connect For Food' Model

If you produce, process, distribute, consume or educate, we are all connected to food!

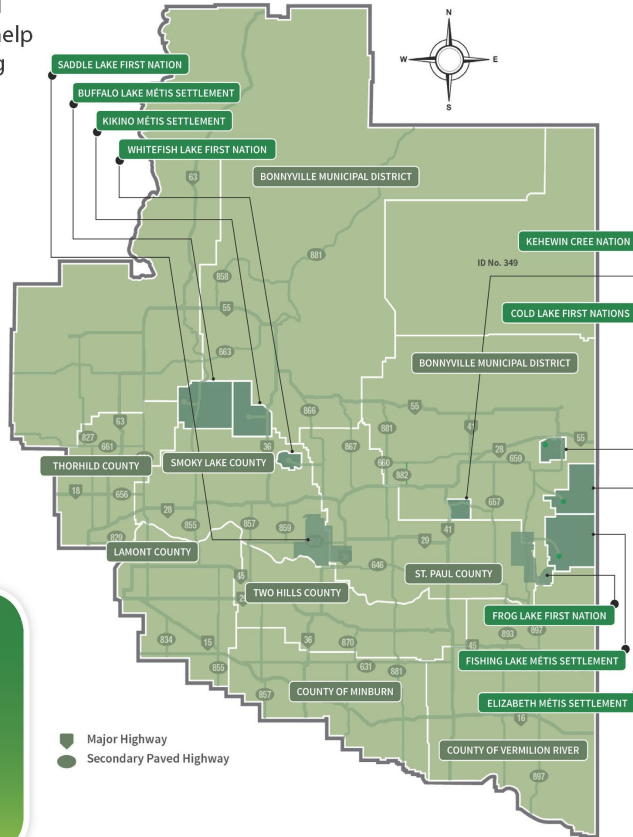
We Need You!

As someone with a connection to local food, we need your valuable input to help create a strong, diversified and thriving local food system.



CONNECT FOR FOOD

A thriving and diverse local food system through advocacy and a community driven approach.



Watch for dates and locations in early 2022 as there will be engagement sessions within each of the municipalities that LARA works in.



is supported by the following :



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From Sand to Soil... continued from page 1

landscape has made a huge difference to the water cycle with changes

to infiltration due to increasing soil health, with improved aggregation, carbon sequestration and increased microbiology. It has also had the side benefit of feeding my bees and attracting other pollinators. Phacelia (purple flower) is a favorite of all pollinators, as well as an amazing soil amendment as it exudes a lot of glomalin from its root system, which is very effective to improve soil aggregation.



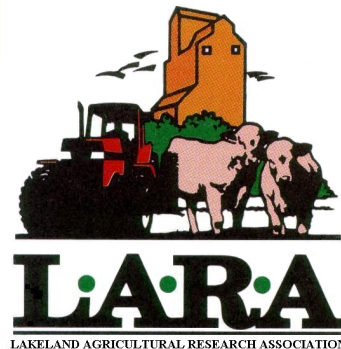
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Sustainable farming encompasses a wide range of practices and principles; combining environmental stewardship with profitability and ensuring that the family farm will be there for generations to come.



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Have you checked out the LARA Youtube channel??

If you missed a webinar that we have hosted you can find it there.
Current videos include: Cover Crop Design, Dugout Webinar Series,
Succession and Pasture Planning

WWW.LARAONLINE.CA

Merry Christmas

MAY YOUR
HOLIDAY
SEASON BE
MERRY AND
BRIGHT



Photo above: how cover crops help to sequester carbon down in a very sandy soil. The year prior the A horizon was only a few cm thick compared to September of this year