



Farm Environmental Stewardship Award

2014 FINALIST

Phillip Burris and his family operate a 480 acre dairy farm along the banks of the Shubenacadie River in Green Oaks, Colchester County. The aptly named Green Oaks Dairy Farm milks 135 cows and has a total cattle herd of 300. They grow corn and legume forages for sustainable feed production for their farm. The farm has long recognized the importance soil and nutrient management.



“You won’t have a farm business if you ignore environmental considerations,” says Phillip. “The two are tied together. As a farmer, if you don’t feed the land, it won’t feed you.” Phillip is very practical and understands the investment required today to be successful tomorrow.



Phillip also knew, when he started the Environmental Farm Plan process, that there were several additional areas on his farm that required investment in order to protect his local environment. Once he received his plan, Phillip set to work gradually making the suggested improvements on the farm. Manure storage was upgraded with a new contained steel storage for dairy manure, a new concrete pad for young cattle and an

extended under barn storage for the heifers. This major investment increased the farm’s manure storage capacity from approximately five months to over nine months. It also reduced the environmental risk of storing manure and also provided additional flexibility with manure application, so manure is applied only when the crop can use it efficiently with less risk of runoff and leaching.

Green Oaks Dairy Farm has also made major improvements in other areas around the farm. Old fuel tanks have been replaced with new double walled tanks, located on a concrete pad with a protective roof. Ditching and drainage work continues to be completed where necessary, which improves field productivity and reduces surface runoff. Lighting has been upgraded to energy

efficient bulbs through Efficiency NS and the farm utilizes natural ventilation, with curtains and chimneys, to help keep barns cool.

The farm continues to focus on soil fertility and management by following recommendations in their nutrient management plan and ensuring soil pH is at optimum levels. Long-term forage is incorporated into the crop rotation with corn.

This helps maintain soil organic matter and improve soil health.



The Burris family's dedication to farm stewardship has made them one of three finalists for this year's Farm Environmental Stewardship Award. The award is part of the Environmental Farm Plan Program created through a partnership of the Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, the Nova Scotia Environmental Farm Plan Team and the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture.

The award recognizes producers who make land, water and habitat stewardship a significant part of their farm operations. To be eligible for the award, farmers must have an environmental farm plan. The voluntary plan helps them identify, assess, and reduce environmental risk on their farms. Since the program's inception in 1999, more than 1,750 farmers have developed Environmental Farm Plans for their operations.

The Environmental Farm Plan Program is supported under *Growing Forward 2*, a five-year agricultural agreement between the governments of Canada and Nova Scotia.
