



# 2016 FINALIST

## *Environmental Farm Plan Stewardship Award*

Hillsdale Fur Farm, owned and operated by Lindon and Charlene Mullen, is located near Weymouth in Digby County. This second generation farm produces high quality mink pelts and currently breeds 16,000 female mink.

As one of Digby County's largest employers, Hillsdale Fur Farm recognizes that environmental sustainability is an important component to maintaining a successful business. The farm has gone through the Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) program and retains the services of an environmental engineering and consulting firm to provide direction on reducing the farm's environmental impact. Based on recommendations made in their EFP and engineering plan, the farm has invested significant resources to improve their runoff process and nutrient management program.



As the farm grew over the years, runoff from the manure and yard became a growing concern. The farm installed ditches, drains and eaves troughs to divert clean surface and roof water around the farm. An extensive drainage and treatment system was also designed and installed, to carry wastewater from the farm and yard (or farmyard) to a settling pond and a constructed wetland. In addition to improving water quality, the pond and wetland provide a new habitat for ducks, muskrats, frogs and a number of other aquatic species.



Water from the wetland is used to trickle irrigate a hybrid willow plantation, with the purpose of capturing nutrients via plant uptake. The farm is working with Dalhousie's Agriculture Campus and Stantec Engineering to measure the nutrient uptake of these willows. The aim of this innovative system is to have no impacted water leaving the farm site. Another goal is to use these quick growing willows as a source of woodchips, which are used under mink cages to absorb manure runoff.

Manure is routinely collected from under the cages with an auger system and taken to a newly constructed storage building. The manure is removed from the farm and taken to a local composting facility or a bio-gas generation facility, where it is used to produce electricity for Nova Scotia Power.



Additional efforts have been made on the farm to protect the local environment. Pesticides and cleaners are stored in a designated storage building to contain any potential spills and the farm has a designated employee trained and certified for safe pesticide use and application. All fuel tanks have been recently upgraded and safety barriers have been installed.

The efforts that the Mullens and Hillsdale Fur Farm have made in order to reduce their environmental impact has made them one of three finalists for this year's Environmental Farm Plan 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 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 1,800 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.

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