



## Open Farm Day a Tremendous Success

On Sunday, September 18th, thousands of visitors flocked to get their backstage pass to see what is happening on farms in Nova Scotia.

Over 60 Nova Scotia farms participated in Open Farm Day this year and the success of the day is credited to the amazing farmers who took time to prepare their farms for the over 15,000 visitors. The weather helped with the event's success as well, we couldn't have asked for a better fall day to welcome families to the world of Nova Scotia Agriculture.

Many farms reported that a high percentage of visitors were families with young children from the urban centres, ie: Halifax and Dartmouth. While still, others reported visitors from neighbouring provinces and as far away as Australia and South Africa who included open farm day in their adventures of Nova Scotia. Most farms reported a higher than expected attendance and some were caught off guard with hundreds of visitors when they expected 20 or 30. Although overwhelmed by the interest and the turnout, farmers participating felt it was a tremendous success and are willing to participate in 2012.



Sky likes the zucchini that resembles a goose  
Photo credits, Claudia Gahlinger and Rejean Chamberland, South Harbour Farms, Cape Breton

As coordinators, NSFA provided open farm day gate signs to the participating farms and used the meet your farmer website to provide identification and directions for visitors

wanting to take part. Although the website maps had a few little glitches, traffic to the site was incredible and obviously a source for information.

The event was also highly promoted through the provincial radio ads, print media in the Chronicle Herald, billboards in 5 Metro locations, and metro transit bus ads. This activity generated radio interviews and contests and we worked with a number of sponsors to organize a remote broadcast of Live at 5 at John and Colleen Eikelenboom's farm in Shubenacadie.

We also used social media and newsletters to further promote the message of Open Farm Day.



This 6-hand team of Percherons, owned by Doug Creelman give Bruce Frisko a tour around the vineyard during the Live at 5 broadcast at Eiklyn Farms in Shubenacadie, all in support of promoting Open Farm Day 2011.



Even Premier Darrell Dexter and his wife Kelly were able to take part in Open Farm Day. Shown also in the photo (centre) is Jim Bremner, Castle Frederick Farm. Photo provided by Castle Frederick Farms, Falmouth

Open Farm Day 2011 was coordinated by Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture through its Meet Your Farmer initiative and sponsored by Sobeys, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture and the provincial Agricultural Awareness committee.



# Water Hits the Mainstream

## Henry Vissers

*Executive Director, Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture*

Pun intended! NSFA has spent a lot of time on water issues over the past few years. Many of you have an Environmental Farm Plan, the genesis of which is the Walkerton incident, and the focus of an EFP plan is mostly around water. It certainly is a risk assessment for other issues on the farm but water is the key risk. I've mentioned in past articles that as our world population climbs to 9 billion the challenge for agriculture will be to feed the additional people with the same land and less water. It is estimated that 69% of world water usage is for irrigation and that it takes 3,000 liters of water to produce enough food for one person, that's compared to drinking requirements which is between 2 and 5 liters. Nova Scotia recently announced a new water resource management strategy called Water for Life. This policy was a date mandated by The Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act (EGSPA) with the stated vision that: Water is essential for life and will be valued, kept safe, and shared. ([http://www.gov.ns.ca/nse/water.strategy/docs/WaterStrategy\\_Water.Resources.Management.Strategy.pdf](http://www.gov.ns.ca/nse/water.strategy/docs/WaterStrategy_Water.Resources.Management.Strategy.pdf))

The report goes on to say that in Nova Scotia, 40 per cent of the population rely on groundwater from wells or springs for drinking water. The other 60 per cent rely on municipal and public drinking water supplies, which draw water from both groundwater and surface water sources. Approximately 45 per cent of Nova Scotians rely on on-site sewage disposal systems for their household wastewater systems.

On the federal level, in 2010 all premiers endorsed the Council of Federation (COF) Water Charter that recognizes the importance of water to life and the economy across Canada.

Through this charter, the premiers across the country agreed to

- continue to support research and development
- encourage water conservation and efficiency
- continue to monitor water quality and quantity
- invest in innovation within the water sector

As provincial and federal water strategies roll out we will all be expected to do our part to preserve and protect our water. Availability of water certainly wasn't an issue this year in NS but the large rain events that we have experienced define another of the issues around water, climate change. Flooding, sea level rise, weather events(erosion), less snow cover etc. are all things we are starting to see due to climate change. Although we may feel isolated from the problem it's important that we work toward solutions, water and weather are certainly linked.

We also need to insure that we advocate for agriculture as policy decisions are made around water, water use, and agriculture's importance in these decisions. In doing our part, Farmers need to be proactive in decisions around irrigation, livestock watering systems, etc.

In doing our part as a general farm organization, NSFA participates in a number of committees and processes to make

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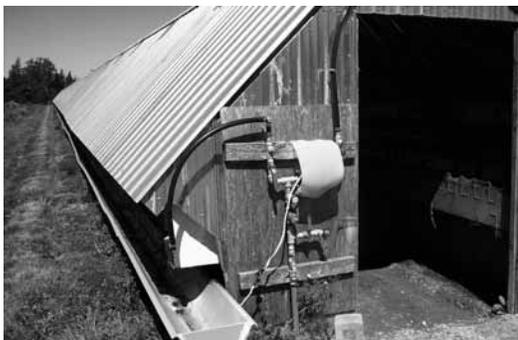
# Executive Policy Session

*"A Learning Experience Regarding the Mink Industry"*

The Federation's Executive Committee travelled to the Annapolis/Digby County area for their annual summer policy session. Meetings were held on August 30th and 31st at the Annapolis Basin Conference Centre – a great spot to stay and reasonable rates as well!

This meeting is the time when the Executive takes a look at the organization as a whole, develops priorities for activities and lobbying efforts in the coming year, and sets the budget. Executive members take a look at the results of the resolutions process to date and the implementation of policy and make recommendations for additional follow-up. The Executive also meets with representatives of local Federations to obtain a view of the major issues in that particular area. It is a time for executive members to become more aware of the differences, as well as the common aspects, of the agricultural industry in the province.

This year the executive tour focused on the mink industry because of the ongoing environmental issues which are a serious threat to these farmers. Proposed regulations are currently being promoted by government which will create restrictions and add considerable cost to the day to day operations of a mink farm. A tour was arranged to provide the Federation Executive with a better picture of the size, issues, and successes of the Nova Scotia Mink Industry.



This photo shows the design for a new mink shed at Mark Thibault's farm with nipple drinkers inside and outside the troughs for collecting manure and waste water which deliver the material to the lagoon at the end of the building.



Our first stop was at the mink farm of Mark Thibault in the Weymouth area. It is fair to say that the majority of our Executive mem-

bers had never been up close to a mink before so this was a real eye opener to see how they are housed, fed, and kept clean. Mark uses nipple drinkers at the rear of his pens which inspires the mink to deposit their manure in the same area. The manure drops through the cage wire and into a trough which will carry the manure and other wastes to a lagoon system for storage until such time as the product can be used as fertilizer, etc. Mark has invested in an impressive biosecurity fence that he hopes to have completed soon to maintain separation between the farmed mink and wild mink so as to curtail the spread of costly diseases.

Our next stop was at a co-operative pelting plant managed by Earl Prime. Earl is a shareholder, along with many other ranchers, as well as being the plant manager. This plant has approximately 170 employees, all from the local area, working from September to April each year with an overall annual payroll well over \$1 million. This plant was not in operation at the time of our visit but Earl gave us a tour of the total process from where the mink come in the door to where the mink pelts go out, and all parts in between. A lot of cooler and freezer space is required and we saw an additional building under construction to handle the ever growing numbers coming to the plant for processing. One of Earl's main goals is to provide the mink farmers with fair payment for the number and quality of the mink they produce and he showed us the various stations in the plant and explained where and how this objective is accomplished. We left wondering how this processing co-operative will ever replace Earl when he retires!



Earl Prime provided the Executive with a wealth of information regarding the importance of the mink industry to the economy of the Digby area.

What happens to all those mink bodies after the pelt is removed? Our final stop of the day was at the com-

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# Lowland Gardens Still Going Strong

In response to the Senate article that appeared in the NSFA News & Views last month, we (Lowland Gardens) want to assure our customers that we are NOT down-sizing, nor are we gradually slowing down. We are very proud to say that we have just finished one of our most successful and rewarding seasons since opening in 1985, and we have full intentions of being here for many years to come. Over the years we have made significant changes to best serve our customers and our business.

It is true that we have reduced the wholesale portion of our business - simply

because we found it to be getting more difficult to cater to both wholesale and retail customers and maintain the customer service and product quality that we want for our customers, and that our customers expect from us.

So YES we will be here in the spring of 2012 and we will have beautiful flowers and baskets ready for all our current and new customers for many years to come.

Tony and Gerrie van den Hoek  
Lowland Gardens  
Great Village

# Executive Policy Session continued



Viewing the composting storage facility at Spec Resources Inc. are (left to right) Charles MacDonald, Hubert LeBlanc (our host), Henry Vissers and Dennis Boudreau.

post facility operated by Hubert LeBlanc, Spec Resources Inc., Concession. A portion of Hubert's business involves composting of the mink bodies with wood products to produce a saleable product. Two tarp buildings in a remote location were visited. The group also viewed a further processing venture involving mink oil which is currently under construction at Spec Resources. Mink oil is used in many products from boot preservatives to soaps and perfumes. Hubert once had a large pork farm at this site in Con-

cession and he must be commended for having successfully transitioned from a declining commodity to one which has hope and vision for a thriving future.

Executive members came away from this Policy Session with a plan for the coming year for the Federation activities and also a deep appreciation for what one agricultural sector has accomplished with their vision for the future and an attitude that any problem has a solution, they just need to find it!

Submitted by,  
Donna Langille, Operations Manager



**Look for your copy of the upcoming year's draft policy paper that is enclosed with this newsletter.**



# Message from Minister MacDonell



Open Farm Day, the Biomass Combustion Conference, and the conclusion of our annual exhibitions have rung in a prosperous fall.

I had the opportunity to participate in a Biomass Workshop in Truro, which was made possible through the partnership of the Ecology Action Centre, the Nova

Scotia Agricultural College, along with the Government of Canada and the province of Nova Scotia through Growing Forward. The Departments of Agriculture, Energy and Environment also played a significant role in putting this great workshop on.

The workshop brought together individuals and agencies who are working together to develop an agricultural biomass industry. A demonstration of the mobile pelletizer unit from BioEnergy Inc., converting hay into pellets for heating is proof of the progressive steps being taken in our agricultural community to help grow and protect the industry and our environment. In a world that is ever changing and requires environmental protection and agricultural stewardship, I believe this unit is timely.

At the same time, the Government of Canada announced an investment of \$850,000 for the Nova Scotia Agricultural College to study and develop

on-farm tools for applying nitrogen. This is great news for our environment and agriculture industry as the investment will help boost producer profitability through green agriculture technologies.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the dedicated and willing farmers who opened their doors to many Nova Scotians on the tenth anniversary of Open Farm Day, which was celebrated in record numbers across Atlantic Canada.

With over 60 farms participating, thousands of families and individuals had the opportunity to experience farming in the areas of beekeeping, dairy and poultry, vineyards, herbs and plants, fruits and vegetables and much more. It was a great celebration of our agriculture industry, which showcases innovative farmers who are helping to bring delicious healthy foods to our table.

The province's Homegrown Success strategy strives to transition the agricultural industry into one of profitability over the next ten years and beyond, while creating good jobs and growing the economy. By working with industry members like many Nova Scotians would have seen on Open Farm Day to pursue new and more competitive business models, we are preparing for the future of this vibrant industry.

May you enjoy a prosperous fall.

Sincerely,  
John MacDonell  
Minister of Agriculture

## Water Hits the Mainstream continued

certain that we are at the table, through the Round Table on the Environment (This group is focused on EGSPA), NSFA Wetlands Committee, Environment Act Advisory Committee and Provincial Water Advisory Group as well as the Environmental Farm Plan.

Water is an essential for life and an essential for agriculture; let's make sure that's the focus.

Comments?  
email: [hvissers@nsfa-fane.ca](mailto:hvissers@nsfa-fane.ca)



# Council of Leaders Highlights

## President's Comments

President Beth Densmore opened the meeting by thanking the Council members present for coming to a meeting on such a nice day when they all probably have lots of work following a summer of wet conditions. Beth commented on some of the events she had attended during the summer – Opening of the Apple Dome and Kings County 4-H event, Fruit Growers tour, Young Farmers Tour, etc. – all of which reaffirm that there continues to be appreciation for new technology and innovation in farming and there are still many people wanting to try their hand at farming. Beth commented on a beautiful field of sweet potatoes she had visited – she didn't know we could grow this crop in NS prior to her visit to the Valley!

Beth also commented on a process being developed for the mentoring of young farmers. For more information please contact the Agri Commodity Management Association at 895-0581.

## Outlook 2021

The Federation is continuing to move forward with the development of its own long term plan for the future, which will be complete with an action plan. Bob Fraser, Gardner Pinfold Consulting Economists is assisting the Federation to develop a responsive document to address the needs in the industry. The first hour of the Council meeting was spent in reviewing the consultant's work to date and providing feedback on the various topics addressed. A final report will be presented to the annual meeting of the Federation in late November.

One suggestion was that collaboration be a major heading in the document so that we can show how all participants in the agricultural industry are working towards a common goal and also indicate that the industry is now branching out to work with many other government departments, in addition to Agriculture. Commodity groups are advised to develop plans for their own groups which can tie in with the overall goals of the Outlook 2021 document.

Another objective of the plan will be to convince retailers that farmers are their best friends.

## Land Applied Biosolids Research at NSAC

Dr. Gordon Price, Chair, Waste Management, NSAC updated the council on the biosolids research efforts at NSAC. The soils part of the research project funded by Agri-Futures is now complete although they will continue to test the

soils at these sites for several more years. Water quality is the next question to be addressed. They have targeted a half-dozen common pharmaceutical products to test for, including caffeine, ibuprofen, triclosan, naproxen, carbamazepine, etc. It is also planned to analyze plant tissue later in the study to get a better idea about plant uptake.

In discussion following the update, farmers from the Halifax/East Hants area indicated that they would like this research to also address hormone levels and levels of antidepressants as these are what consumers are questioning them about.

## The Fracking Question

John Drage, Hydrologist with the Department of Environment and Brent Baxter, Co-Chair of the Fracking Review Committee were welcomed to the meeting to provide an overview of this mining procedure which is the cause of a lot of controversy in many rural areas of the province. A very large volume of water is required for the fracturing and there is concern about what is in the water as a result of it being used in this process. There are also concerns relating to underground damage to the soil structure. The Nova Scotia Government does have rules and regulations in place designed to protect the quality and quantity of ground and surface water. More info is available at [www.gov.ns.ca/nse](http://www.gov.ns.ca/nse). Technical reviews of potential environmental issues are now underway to be completed in early 2012.

## Agricultural Water Committee

The committee formed to handle the funds delivered to the NSFA by the provincial government for water issues requested Council to provide some direction as to how these dollars should be allocated in the industry. The Council indicated that in addition to the goals listed in the committee's terms of reference this group should also address the need to assure a sustainable quantity and quality of water is available to agricultural operations, and to negotiate with government any issues arising from the permitting process for water withdrawal by farmers. A revised Terms of Reference is to be taken back to the February Council meeting.

## Crop Insurance

Bill MacLeod, CEO of the NS Crop & Livestock Insurance Commission gave an overview of the current crop and livestock insurance programs and the Wildlife Compensation Programs being administered by their office. Annual reports and claims info is available on the Crop Insurance web-site. The Commission is now

# Council of Leaders Highlights continued

holding a surplus of about \$5 million, which is down compared to prior years. This year the Commission is expecting a significant amount of payouts, mainly in blueberries, and forage crops with some apple losses yet to be clarified. \$107,000. had been paid out to date for wildlife damage. Issues involving cross compliance with the Advanced Payments Program and AgriStability were also discussed.

There is currently a vacancy on the Board of Directors so Bill invited interested farmers to put their names forward.

## Farm Programs for 2011

Loretta Robichaud and Steve Tattrie were welcomed to the meeting to provide an overview of the response to programs during the past year. Loretta noted that this will be the last presentation where she will be comparing the program dollars to the previous Farm Investment Fund; from this point on they will be adjusting to the Home Grown Success structure, identified as: 1) Innovation, 2) Business Development and BRM, 3) Environment, and 4) Quality Assurance.

Information was provided on the uptake in various programs. Most programs have been closed for some time however the Genetic Enhancement Program still has funds available and applications are still being accepted. The Beef Interest Pay Down program has had good uptake as well. In regard to the BRM programs they are processing 2009 at present. Approximately \$10 - \$12 million is spent annually through these. The Atlantic Premiers are currently doing a feasibility study on establishing an Atlantic administration for BRM.

The top five BMPs were: 1) manure storage and handling, 2) farm yard run-off, 3) sustainable water practices, 4) product and waste management, and 5) sustainable agricultural water supply. The top three commodities accessing funds are: 1) dairy, 2) beef, and 3) apples, vegetables and mink. The top three counties were: 1) Kings, 2) Cumberland, and 3) Colchester and Annapolis.

Comments closed with the indication that the Department plans to be much earlier next year in the delivery of the programs.

## Farm Safety Nova Scotia

Peter Morine gave a progress report on the work which is ongoing in support of establishing the new organization for the promotion of farm safety and to provide farmers with information to assist them to be compliant with

OH&S. Peter introduced Trevor Davison, who is replacing Ralph Baxter as Farm Safety Coordinator. It was decided to go forward with a part time position to reduce the program costs.

At the April Council of Leaders meeting a budget was presented for funding the ongoing work of the FSNS and it was being proposed at that time that FSNS be funded through a surcharge on the Farm Registration System amounting to 14 % billed to all registrants. The Board of FSNS over the summer months has changed its focus to manage within existing resources. With the change to part time staff, and the approval of a funding project through the Canadian Agricultural Safety Association, the FRS increase can be avoided for at least a couple of years, giving the new organization more time to develop on a gradual basis.

## Workplace Training Needs For Farmers

A pilot project with the Department of Labour and Advanced Education is now taking place in the central area of the province to address the training needs of farmers in order to improve their business viability. Two courses focused on financial decision making on farms will be held commencing September 27th – one in West River Fire Hall, Pictou County and the other in the Stewiacke United Church.

Similar courses will be rolled out in other areas of the province over the fall and winter months.

## Lease Committee Update

During the past year the Federation has been searching for other possible locations for the NSFA office in an effort to lower our costs of doing business while still maintaining an adequate facility for staff and easy access for members. Two possible sites have been investigated to date but the decision has been made to continue the search.

As a result the Federation is now looking at an existing building at AgriTech Park in Bible Hill. It is expected that renovations can be carried out and we will have a very pleasant office facility with adequate parking and easy access, even for trucks and livestock trailers! The facility would be laid out similar to the Agra-Point offices in that same location. And the price is right. Our existing lease runs until September, 2012 so we have time to make sure that all is right before moving in. The Federation's Lease Committee will now take over the finer details of the negotiations.

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# Council of Leaders Highlights continued

## Resolutions Committee Report

Information was circulated on the work that the committee has done in regard to the various resolutions passed at the 2010 AGM. This work is ongoing throughout the year. Information on the resolutions will be available to all members prior to the annual meeting.

## Miscellaneous

• Reports were presented on the activities of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, Resolutions Committee, Energy Committee, Environmental Farm Plans, Communications, and the following commodity groups: Mink Breeders, Grape Growers, Fruit Growers, Christmas Tree Growers, Sheep Breeders, Turkey Farmers and Hort Nova Scotia and county federations: Annapolis, and Halifax-East Hants. Robert Richards always brings us back to the harsh reality of Nova Scotia Agriculture in the 21st century with his statistics on the production levels for various commodities in the 1930's compared to today,

i.e. 80,000 sheep in the 30's compared to 12,000 today.

- A budget was approved for presentation to the Annual Meeting. Revisions were also approved for some minor changes to the expense claim policy.
- Farm Registration numbers were provided – the Federation has 2220 members in 2011, which compared to 2256 members in 2010.
- The restrictions of the Privacy Act are hindering the development of sound policy because organizations cannot obtain the facts and figures needed to make appropriate decisions. It was requested that the NSFA pursue a solution.
- The proposed Standing Policy for the Federation for 2012 was presented by Henry Vissers for discussion and revision. A copy will be sent to all members with the October newsletter.
- An update was provided on the NSAC/DAL merger by representatives of the College and the Department of Agriculture. The merger is expected to be complete by September, 2012.

## Apple Cinnamon Pancakes

- 1-1/2 cups (375 mL) all-purpose flour
- 1-1/2 cups (375 mL) whole wheat flour
- 1 tbsp (15 mL) baking powder
- 1 tsp (5 mL) ground cinnamon
- 1/2 tsp (2 mL) salt
- 3 eggs
- 2-1/2 cups (625 mL) Milk
- 1/4 cup (50 mL) butter, melted
- 2 tbsp (30 mL) pure maple syrup or packed brown sugar
- 1-1/2 cups (375 mL) shredded apple (about 2 large)
- 2 tbsp (30 mL) butter for cooking (approx.)



## Instructions

In a large bowl, combine all-purpose and whole wheat flours, baking powder, cinnamon and salt. In separate bowl, whisk together eggs, Milk, melted butter and maple syrup; pour over dry ingredients and add apples. Stir gently just until combined (a few lumps should remain). In large nonstick skillet over medium heat, melt a thin layer of butter. Scoop about 1/3 cup (75 mL) batter per pancake into skillet. Cook for 2 min or until bubbles break in batter but do not fill in; turn and cook for 1 to 2 min longer or until golden and puffed. Repeat with remaining butter and batter, adjusting heat as necessary to prevent burning.

We would like to extend our congratulations and best wishes to Lynda Weatherby and her husband, Gregor Archibald, on the safe arrival of Ryland Weatherby McGregor Archibald, born at 6 lbs 5 oz on Sept 17th. Lynda is a coordinator with the EFP Group.

## News & Views

**NSFA News & Views** is the Newsletter of the NS Federation of Agriculture, the United, Strong & Caring Farm Organization representing the best interest of Nova Scotia's Agricultural Industry.

**News & Views** is provided free of charge to its members. We value comments and concerns from our members, please direct them to Executive members or the Office Staff.

### 2011 Executive Members:

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2nd Vice President:	<b>Richard Melvin</b>	Phone: 582-7939
CFA Director:	<b>Dennis Boudreau</b>	Phone: 769-3501
At Large:	<b>Edna Foster</b>	Phone: 661-4366
At Large:	<b>David Young</b>	Phone: 543-8748
At Large:	<b>Charles MacDonald</b>	Phone: 564-2080

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