

MEDIA RELEASE
For Immediate Release
October 5, 2011

Local collaborative wins Minister's Award for Environmental Excellence

The Kawartha Farm Stewardship Collaborative has won a 2011 Minister's Award for Environmental Excellence. The award is one of six across the province, recognizing “leadership and innovation in environmental protection”. The Collaborative is a partnership of thirteen organizations in the Kawartha region. Together, they provide funding, technical support and physical resources to farmland owners looking to reduce on-farm risks to the environment.

In 2010, thirty-four projects were funded by the Collaborative with a total value of \$240,000. The farmland owners contributed to the projects, either financially, through physical labour or using on-farm materials or equipment to carry out the project.

Projects focus on water quality and habitat protection on farmland, as well as areas downstream. The most common activity undertaken is exclusion of livestock from streams, wetlands and lakes where they go to water. Alternative sources of water are then provided, especially solar systems that are very useful in pastures where electricity is unavailable. Other projects include construction of proper stream crossings, restoring wetlands and controlling erosion.

These types of projects are often viewed by farmers as “nice to have”. They do not enhance the day-to-day business of farming and they cost money, which may be in short supply. Further, they may require permitting, engineered solutions or technical knowledge that are daunting. By offering support in navigating these technicalities, the Collaborative is able to accomplish projects that otherwise would not have been tackled at all, and that benefit the whole community.

The Collaborators now include three Stewardship Councils (Peterborough, Victoria and Northumberland), the Community Stream Steward Program, Lakeland Alliance, Ducks Unlimited Canada, the Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) representatives for Peterborough, Northumberland, the City of Kawartha Lakes and the Regional Municipality of Durham and four Conservation Authorities (Kawartha Region, Otonabee Region, Lower Trent and Ganaraska).

Farmland owners wanting to participate attend a free Environmental Farm Plan workshop and complete a comprehensive self-assessment of potential environmental risks. They are then invited to submit project ideas to the Collaborative to proceed with identified improvements. The members work together to commit the level of funding, expertise and support required to bring the project within the means of the farm owner. The Collaborative is on track to complete projects valued over \$500,000 in 2011.

Rob Crowley, a beef farmer in Peterborough County, has had the support of the Collaborative to complete several projects on his farm. “I can say for certain that I would not have been able to complete these projects without the help of several agencies and the key people within these organizations.”

If you would like to know more about the work of the Collaborative, contact your county Stewardship Council Coordinator (www.ontariostewardship.org), your local Environmental Farm Plan Program Representative (www.ontariosoilcrop.org) or call Pat Learmonth at 705-295-1590.

For more information on the Minister of the Environment’s Award for Environmental Excellence, please visit www.ontario.ca/environmentalexcellence.

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