



ONTARIO SOIL AND CROP IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

1 Stone Road West, 1st Floor, Guelph, Ontario N1G 4Y2
Toll: 1-800-265-9751 Tel: 1-519-826-4214 www.ontariosoilcrop.org

January 7, 2015

For immediate release

Rotational grazing, fencing projects improve bottom line while benefitting wildlife

By Katie Burt for the Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association

Chris Knight is a cattleman with 80 purebred Black Angus and 30 years in the beef industry. Knight owns Clear Creek Farms, an operation just five kilometers from the farm of his father Victor where he got his start in farming. Such a rich history of living off the land in Chatham-Kent's Carolinian Zone gave Knight a great appreciation for biodiversity.

After learning Clear Creek's woodlot was home to several species at risk, Knight began to immediately seek out ways to use Best Management Practices (BMPs) on his farm to be a better steward to the land.

In fall of 2013, he took an Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) workshop, delivered by the Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association (OSCIA), where he was inspired by the water-centered look at his operation.

"It let's you look at your farm in different ways and in ways that society is increasingly looking at agriculture, especially with all the emphasis on water quality," Knight says. "I think protecting the Great Lakes is an important issue that we're going to have to face shortly."

Armed with information about his farm's environmental needs, Knight set out to seek funding opportunities to refine the rotational grazing system already used on his farm. He found his answer in an advertisement for the Species at Risk Farm Incentive Program (SARFIP) delivered by OSCIA, offering cost-share to farmers who were willing to implement BMPs that had significant benefit to species at risk.

Knight was able to use SARFIP funding to extend his rotational grazing fence. So far, the project has been a win-win for the farmer and the species at risk that reside in the grasslands alongside his beef herd.

"We had done [rotational grazing] before last year, but not to the extent we do now. We move our cattle every day, sometimes twice a day," Knight says. "It's going really well. We're seeing a huge increase in stocking capacity on the land and a huge benefit to species at risk such as Bobolink and pollinators."

Improvements are visible. The Carolinian Canada Coalition, who wrote a letter of support for Knight's 2014 fencing project, noted an "astounding concentration of about 12 breeding pairs of Bobolink".

Knight was also able to implement a BMP to install permanent fencing to prevent cattle access to his Carolinian woodlot, which houses many native and rare species. He was also a significant proponent in getting his father, Victor on board to fence cattle from forested areas and installing a remote watering system through SARFIP.

"I think [the project] was the right thing to do," Knight says. "Agriculture can benefit the environment more than harm it if it's done properly. I would definitely recommend [SARFIP]; it's a way to improve your farming operation's bottom line while enhancing and protecting wildlife and biodiversity on your farm."

SARFIP's claim deadline has been changed to January 15, 2015. Farm businesses are eligible to receive up to \$20,000 in cost-share for implementing projects from the program guide; projects completed after April 1, 2014 can be submitted. Spring tree planting projects are also eligible. For more information about the types of projects covered and for application packages, please visit:

www.ontariosoilcrop.org/en/programs/species_at_risk.htm

-30-

The Species at Risk Farm Incentive Program (SARFIP) is a cost-share program delivered by the Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association (OSCIA) and funded by Environment Canada and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNR). The program aims to help farmers adopt Best Management Practices (BMPs) to enhance the farm operation, while supporting local species at risk, improving forests, grasslands, wetlands and wildlife.

For more information, please contact:

Katie Burt, Communications Specialist
Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association
T. 519-826-3033
E. katie.burt@ontariosoilcrop.org
www.ontariosoilcrop.org

For video footage of Chris Knight's rotational grazing fence and his operation, please visit www.clearcreek.ca.