



# REPORT TO INDUSTRY

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## Harvesting the potential of AEFP's Technical Assistant network

### *Benefits to producers are fundamental to program success*

Alberta's Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) program has been built on the technical knowledge of many people across the province. But as important as that initial technical input into the core materials of the program was, even more important is the ongoing support of the network of Technical Assistants who provide support on a daily basis.

Known in the system as "TAs," these people are the technical backbone of the program. There are approximately 65 of them located across the province and they come to the program courtesy of the many corporate players who are essentially partners in the process.

Here are some examples:

### NETWORK PLAYERS

Several players contribute to the province-wide network of TAs. "Like an Oscars' acceptance speech, it's risky to list them since there are quite a number of them and all are important," says Mike Slomp, executive director of the Alberta Environmental Farm Plan Company (AEFP). "They collectively form an impressive knowledge backdrop to the EFP program across Alberta."

**Counties and ag fieldmen.** County staff across the province take on the TA role as part of their regular business activities and ag fieldmen, who work for farmers on a daily basis, add to that list.

**Alberta Environmentally Sustainable Agriculture program (AESAs).** A partnership of the provincial government in Alberta and industry,

AESA was set up to encourage environmental stewardship in the agricultural industry. Many of the AESA technical extension staff contribute to the EFP network.

**Alberta Agriculture and Food.** A founding partner of AEFP, the province's broad agricultural extension network has been key in the technical information behind EFP program materials, as well as contributing expertise of staff through the EFP TA network.

**Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada / Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration (AAFC / PFRA).** Another founding partner, AAFC / PFRA provides critical technical assistance both at EFP workshops and through the Canada-Alberta Farm Stewardship Program (CAFSP).

**Other supporters.** Several other AEFP supporters provide a critical base of technical support. Ducks Unlimited has a long history of providing conservation assistance and has been a TA supporter since EFP's inception. Other TA supporters include Reduced Tillage Linkages, Southern Applied Research Development Association, Chinook Applied Research Association, Central Peace Conservation Society, Battle River Research Group, West Central Conservation Group, North West Alliance Conservation Initiative, UFA, Lakeside Fertilizer, and Lakeland Agriculture Research Association.

### ROLE OF THE TA

Perhaps the most prominent role for TAs is at EFP workshops where they are



present to provide personal assistance at the first stages of the EFP process. That continues with ongoing support as the process continues.

**On-farm role.** With their technical knowledge and background on the EFP program, the TAs are best suited for on-farm support. "It's an important service for the program," says Slomp, "because many things producers want to discuss are best discussed first-hand and in specifics as they pertain to their operation."

**CAFSP assistance.** While all TAs are aware of and provide producer technical support for the entire EFP program, the TAs with AAFC / PFRA are also directly involved with producers under the Canada-Alberta Farm Stewardship

TAs like Delaney Anderson provide technical support to EFP participants.



Above photo:  
AEFP Regional Team Leader  
Perry Phillips links farmers  
to technical assistants in  
his area.

Program. They are available to provide individual assistance to producers with questions who call the toll-free line or meet at farm meetings, etc.

That program provides up to \$50,000 per farm of cost-share funding for on-farm environmental improvements in 26 categories of beneficial management practices.

### AEFP STAKEHOLDERS CAN HELP

One of the key messages of the EFP program is to ensure producer

participants are aware of the TA support and feel entirely comfortable asking for assistance. While this would appear to be obvious, the fact is that workshop questions show producers often face roadblocks in the development of their EFP, things that TAs can often provide answers to.

“It is very important that our stakeholders remind producers at every opportunity that free, personal, confidential help is available for producers in all areas of the province on all topics under the EFP program.

If a specific TA does not have the information on a particular topic, they are backed by the entire network of TAs where they can get answers.

### FAST ANSWERS

AEFP has made this message a key for the program. Producers can get fast answers by calling toll-free to 866-844-2337 or by visiting the AEFP Web site [www.AlbertaEFP.com](http://www.AlbertaEFP.com) CAFSP funding assistance information is available by calling toll-free to 800-667-8567.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

If you would like information on any aspect of the Alberta Environmental Farm Plan Company, check the AEFP Web site at [www.AlbertaEFP.com](http://www.AlbertaEFP.com) or contact the AEFP office. We welcome your comments, questions and suggestions. Articles in this Report To Industry newsletter may be reproduced. Acknowledgement of the source is appreciated.

#### Partners in Progressive Stewardship:



The Alberta Environmental Farm Plan Company  
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The Agriculture Policy Framework (APF)  
A FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL-TERRITORIAL INITIATIVE

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### EFP FYI

#### New on the AEFP Web.

The AEFP Web site is home to the latest information on many environmental subjects, virtually all of which are available to stakeholders for use in their publications.

Some recently posted examples of feature articles under the *AEFP Journal* Web magazine are:

• **Natural resources equals wealth on 'all natural' farm.** Why custom grazer Steve Kenyon sees every form of life on the land as playing a role in successful production.

• **Using financial thinking to develop an environmental strategy.** Don and Elaine Lysons say mapping a farm's environmental future is a lot like developing a personal financial strategy. The key is having a plan.

• **Newsletter goes electronic.** A reminder that the AEFP *Report to Industry* newsletter is now distributed electronically. Anyone who wishes to receive a copy can receive it simply by providing their email address. Stakeholders who do not have an email can receive a printed copy.