



REPORT TO INDUSTRY

Volume 3, Issue 10



Facilitators and TAs drive next generation of EFP workshop delivery

Teamwork key to successful workshops



The agricultural industry in Alberta is continuing to recognize the value of developing Environmental Farm Plans (EFPs). With that, EFP workshops, which introduce farmers and ranchers to the EFP process, are being acknowledged as a model of success for delivering valuable information to producers.

At the same time, the new era of information delivery has made this process a challenge. “When it comes to delivering workshops, one of the most important goals is to make sure participants get the right information from the right people,” says Mike Slomp, executive director for the Alberta Environmental Farm Plan Company (AEFP).

“This is why the delivery of EFP workshops can be divided into two basic components. The first is information on the EFP process and how to use it in order to identify opportunities for on-farm environmental improvements. This component is provided by workshop facilitators who are usually producers from the local community.

“The second is technical guidance on how to make these improvements. This is supplied by technical assistants (TAs). These TAs are part of a strong, province-wide network which provides the technical foundation of the EFP program.”

Key to successful workshop delivery, says Alan Pasolli, AEFP Regional Team Leader (RTL) for the South Region and a workshop facilitator, is understanding the timing involved in rolling out these workshops and using teamwork to meet participants’ needs.

“Ultimately, the goal for both facilitators and TAs is to provide participants with a working environment in which they can be comfortable asking questions, and confident that their questions will be answered by the most reliable resources possible.”

Role of facilitators

Workshop facilitators play a number of roles in the EFP program. When it comes to workshops, they provide a connection

“Teamwork is key to meeting participants’ needs,” says AEFP Regional Team Leader Alan Pasolli.

between the EFP program and the community, organizing and delivering them on the request of local producers. For this reason, facilitators are usually local producers themselves, says Slomp.

“Alberta producers made it clear during the formative stages of the EFP program that they wanted the program’s delivery system to be rooted in their local communities,” he says. “They wanted to make sure the people who delivered the program understood the unique needs and challenges involved in making on-farm environmental improvements in their regions and their communities.

“Workshop facilitators help fulfil this need by interacting with producers, assessing their needs, and often tailoring workshops to better address those needs.”

Continued on page 2

Continued from page 1

The primary role of facilitators in the workshop setting is to walk participants through the EFP workbook – the key tool in the EFP process. This involves explaining to participants how to use the workbook to get the most value from the EFP process.

“Facilitators are also there to answer questions pertaining to the EFP process,” says Pasolli. “However, because facilitators are generally not trained in technical matters, they cannot provide participants with assistance in putting Beneficial Management Practices (BMPs) into

place on their farms and ranches or answer questions of a technical nature. Instead, this role is filled by TAs.”

In addition to their roles in workshops, facilitators also play a role in the EFP review process by representing EFP participants before the review team. “The review process, in which EFPs are either deemed appropriate or sent back to the participant with suggestions for improvement, is a confidential one,” says Pasolli. “For this reason, facilitators answer the review team’s questions and explain individual circumstances surrounding the EFP.”

They also provide participants with an ongoing link to the program. “AEFP has a strong information program which connects producers to further opportunities to participate. Facilitators explain how participants can sign up to receive this information.”

Role of TAs


TAs are the technical “go to” people of the EFP program. They are comprised of technical resource people from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada – Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration (AAFC – PFRA), Alberta Agriculture and Food (AF) and a number of other prominent players in Alberta’s agricultural industry. TAs provide ongoing input into the EFP process, periodically helping to adjust the program from a technical perspective to better meet the needs of participants.

At the workshop level, TAs are on hand to answer participants’ technical questions or put them in touch with resources that can help them find the answers they’re looking for. Unlike workshop facilitators, whose influence ends at the farm gate, most TAs are available to help producers make the on-farm environmental improvements identified in their EFPs.

“Because they are qualified to provide technical advice, TAs offer an invaluable resource to the EFP program,” says Slomp. “They help extend the value of the program to producers by providing ongoing guidance. Producers sometimes face roadblocks in the development of their EFPs, and TAs can often provide answers. From that perspective, they also help keep participants associated with the program over the longer term.”

Teamwork at workshops

“Understanding these roles is key to working as a team to meet participants’ needs at EFP workshops,” says Pasolli. “It comes down to facilitators and TAs developing a rapport with each other. That way, they both know the questions they should be answering at workshops and when to defer to the other’s expertise.”

This rapport is developed through both experience and ongoing training, he says. “Events such as our recent fall training meeting helped new facilitators and TAs understand their respective roles. They also offer longer established teams a reminder of the fundamentals of workshop delivery and knowledge of new developments in the EFP program.” 

EFP FYI



New on the AEFP Web. The AEFP Web site at www.AlbertaEFP.com 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:

Tech Talk: The difference between alkali and alkaline soils. Having a clear understanding is key to appropriate soil management.

Tech Talk: Used motor oil options. Several options are available, but exercise caution.

Tech Talk: Preventing off-site watering systems from freezing. There are ways to make off-site watering work in winter.

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 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
Progressive Stewardship

Canada **Alberta**

The Agricultural Policy Framework (APF)
A FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL-TERRITORIAL INITIATIVE

The Alberta Environmental Farm Plan Company
801 - 4445 Calgary Trail
Edmonton, Alberta T6H 5R7
Telephone: 780.436.2339
Fax: 780.436.2382
Toll Free: 1.866.844.AEFP(2337)
Web Site: www.AlbertaEFP.com