



FORAGE VIEWS

SPRING
2021

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***It's time to renew
your WCFA
membership***

WCFA SAYS FAREWELL TO MANAGERS

They say the only thing that is certain in this world is change, and that is certainly proving to be true around here as of late. We once again have some major changes within our organization to share with you.

Many have been wondering when Melissa Freeman would be returning. Melissa has quite enjoyed the last several months spent with her kids, cows and dogs and has decided she will not be returning to WCFA. We have missed her presence over the last while, and we are certainly sad to see her go.

As you all know, Rachael Nay has been filling the position of General Manager in Melissa's absence. Rachael has recently made the tough decision to leave WCFA as well. Rachael has been a valued member of our team for a few years, having filled a few different roles during her time. Rachael's last day with us will be Friday, April 9th.

Both of these wonderful ladies will be greatly missed, and certainly leave behind some big shoes to fill. A huge thank-you to both for their hard-work and dedication to our organization, it certainly wouldn't be where it is without them. We wish them nothing but the best and good luck in whatever it is they choose to do next. We certainly hope to bump into them at future events!

For those of you attached to our rodent control crew: Rachael will be taking a piece of WCFA with her as Keith & Kenny have grown quite accustomed to the luxury living she has provided them over the winter and they will remain living the good life in Rachael's home.

Please bear with us over the next few weeks as we navigate this transition period. We will be sure to share with you all when we have completed the search for our new manager.



2021 Annual General Meeting Update

WCFA

Typically our AGM is hosted in March of each year. As you know, last year's AGM was cancelled due to concerns amid COVID-19 and the restrictions in place as a result. We are intending to host an AGM this year, however, at this time we do not have a date, nor a delivery method finalized. Once we have details, we will be sure to share them with you.

As a reminder: in order to vote at an AGM you must be a member in good standing, so now is a great time to renew your membership!

HAVE YOU RENEWED YOUR WCFA MEMBERSHIP?

To renew your membership:
www.westcentralforage.com/about/membership

*Memberships cover the
period from
Jan 1-Dec 31 and need to
be renewed annually.*

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Coffee, Cows & Crops Podcast

with host
Johanna Murray



produced by the
Peace Country Beef & Forage Association

WCFA Project Featured on Peace Country Beef & Forage Podcast!

We recently joined Johanna Murray, from our sister organization Peace Country Beef & Forage Association (PCBFA), on their Coffee, Cows & Crops Podcast to chat about our Soil Moisture In Forage Systems project, that will be getting underway this Spring.

In the episode Jessica and Johanna were joined by Chelsea Pearce, from Martin Deerline, to discuss the use of in-field weather stations and soil moisture probes in a number of forage-based systems. If you're curious to learn more about this project, we suggest giving the podcast a listen! We will, of course, be providing updates as the project progresses in this newsletter and on our website. Melissa has been hard at work on this project, and we are all excited to get these probes and weather stations installed throughout our region!

If you wish to listen to the podcast visit:

www.peacecountrybeef.ca/podcast

There are plenty of other episodes you may find interesting as well!

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Errol & Barb Verbeek and Family
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CAREER OPPORTUNITY

FULL-TIME MANAGER

WCFA requires a full-time, permanent Manager to join our team!

The Manager is responsible for overseeing the development, execution, and dissemination of information obtained from applied research trials. The Manager is responsible for implementation of the strategic plan and business plan as defined by the Board of Directors.

PRIMARY DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- Be an active and passionate leader within the organization;
- Oversee the efficient and effective day-to-day operation of the organization;
- Work with the Board to develop and implement a strategic plan;
- Work with the Board to formulate and implement policy;
- Oversee the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the organization's programs and services;
- Oversee all staff hiring, appraisals, and discipline;
- Lead fundraising planning and implementation, including identifying resource requirements, researching funding sources and establishing strategies to approach funders;
- Grant applications; submitting proposals and administering fundraising records, and documentation;
- Administer the funds of the organization according to the approved budget and monitor the monthly cash flow of the organization;
- Ensure that sound bookkeeping and accounting procedures are followed;
- Establish good working relationships and collaborative arrangements with community groups, funders, politicians, and other industry organizations to help achieve the goals of the organization;
- Identify and evaluate the risks to the organization's people (members, staff, management, volunteers), property, finances, goodwill, and image and implement measures to control risks.

REQUIREMENTS

- Applicants must:
- have post secondary education and work experience in business management related to the field of agriculture, biological or environmental sciences;
 - valid class 5 drivers license;
 - have excellent communication and organization skills;
 - be able to multi task different programs and projects throughout the year;
 - have good working computer knowledge;
 - be able to work individually and within teams;
 - have the ability to work flexible hours.

Wages to be determined based on experience. Full competitive medical benefits and insurance package is provided after three months. Position is subject to a six-month probation period.

APPLY

Applications can be submitted electronically by **Monday, April 12th** to:

Attn: Grant Chittick
West-Central Forage Association

Email: board@westcentralforage.com

NEW TOOLS TO UNDERSTAND NATURAL HABITATS ON FARMLAND ALBERTA EFP LAUNCHES UPDATED WEBBOOK

CONTENT ADAPTED FROM MARCH 3RD BLOG POST ON ALBERTAEFP.COM

As of March 29, 2021, Alberta EFP has updated to a new version of the online webbook. Included in the update is a new Habitat Management Tool that includes the Habitat & Biodiversity Assessment Tool. Below Alberta EFP answers some common questions about the update.

What changes are being made?

Alberta EFP is introducing a new Habitat Management Chapter with other updates with the launch of the new version of the webbook. The Habitat Management Chapter will be unlike any other as it also includes the Habitat & Biodiversity Assessment Tool. Using a similar format as the rest of the webbook, a series of question prompts will guide the farmer through the assessment to help develop an action plan. This tool will allow farmers to understand the habitat on their land better, how they can positively contribute to Alberta's biodiversity and offer another perspective on the value of their land.

Some chapters previously located under farmstead sites and field sites are now considered whole-farm chapters. The whole farm chapter section will appear as follows;

Chapter 1 - Site and Soil Characteristics

Chapter 2 - Water sources

Chapter 3 - Water Bodies is now a stand-alone chapter that will include the water body inventory

Chapter 4 - Environmental Emergency Planning will now be mandatory

Chapter 5 - Habitat Management is a new chapter

Chapter 6 - Trees, Shelterbelts, Woodlots and Bush

Upon approval of the workbook, producers will receive a report indicating how they would have scored against the Sustainable Agriculture Initiative Platform's Farm Sustainability Assessment (FSA) 2.1. The FSA is a global standard that allows producers to demonstrate their sustainability performance against an internationally accepted framework. The report is for awareness purposes, and cannot be used to make a claim.

Why was new content being added?

Alberta EFP is working towards alignment with the global Farm Sustainability Assessment silver standard. Habitat and biodiversity are components of this assessment. In order to support Alberta farmers and maintain market access, it was clear that this was a useful component to add to the Alberta EFP.

If you have questions about this update, your EFP, or you are wishing to start the EFP process please contact our in-house EFP Technician, Jessica, at conservationag@westcentralforage.com or (780) 621-8670.



www.albertaefp.com

ALBERTA ENVIRONMENTAL FARM PLAN

HELP US WITH OUR HABITAT MANAGEMENT TOOL

We are looking for those with an existing EFP to help us with new recommendations

Alberta EFP has developed a new habitat management tool, and we want to understand what suggested practices will help make a real difference in the real world.

We are hosting an online workshop for Alberta farmers where you will have help with the new chapter. After the workshop, we will follow up with you to ask you what you learned, thought and implemented on your farm.

Participants will receive a copy of the Blue Book and EFP Swag!



Workshop Dates:

April 7, 2021 - 10 am - 11:30 am

April 8, 2021 - 1:30 pm - 3 pm

April 13, 2021 - 2 pm - 3:30 pm

RSVP Email: info@albertaEFP.com

RSVP Phone: 587-200-2552

This project was undertaken with the financial support of:
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Environment and
Climate Change Canada

Environnement et
Changement climatique Canada



2021 CANADA THISTLE BIOLOGICAL CONTROL PROGRAM UPDATE

JESSICA WATSON, CONSERVATION AG PROGRAM COORDINATOR

We continue to receive a substantial amount of inquiries about the Canada thistle stem-gall fly and stem-mining weevil. The most common question, of course, is whether or not you will be able to order either of these biocontrol agents in 2021.

The short answer: we do not know for certain at this point if we will be able to bring the insects across the border. However, we continue to have ongoing discussions with our suppliers in Montana, and we are all working to find any way to be able to safely deliver the insects.

That being said, we are not planning to bring in the stem-gall flies this year. Tentatively, we are planning to offer stem-mining weevils, pending our ability to cross the border and our staff being able to safely deliver them to all parties. We are, however, not accepting orders for the weevils just yet. We will notify you when (and if) we are ready to do so.

We thank you for your patience and understanding. While we appreciate all your suggestions in regards to getting the bugs across border, please know we are doing all we can to find solutions and maintain the safety of our staff. We will continue to provide updates moving forward.



WCFA SPRING PROJECTS UPDATE

WCFA STAFF

Curious to know what we've got in the works for trials and demonstrations this year? Read on to find out!

SMALL PLOT RESEARCH TRIALS

National Industrial Hemp Variety Trials

WCFA will once again be participating in these trials with the Canadian Hemp Trade Alliance and several organizations throughout the country. Hemp trials will once again be grown at the Brazeau County Research Site.

As of yet we do not know which varieties or how many of each type (grain; dual-purpose) we will be receiving.

Regional Silage Variety Trial

Once again WCFA is cooperating with a number of organizations across the province on the Regional Silage Variety Trials.

This will be the first trial to be grown at our newest Research Site in Lac Ste. Anne County, near our new shop facility. We are looking forward to getting projects in the ground at this new site and being able to provide even more regional data to you all.

Perennial Forage Evaluation Trial

In cooperation with a number of our sister organizations across the province, we are participating in the Perennial Forage Evaluation Trials.

Trial varieties were planted at the Yellowhead County Research Site in July 2020, which was our second attempt at establishing this trial at the site. We will be assessing winter survivability, along with dry matter yield and nutritional quality on the surviving varieties this year and in future years.

OTHER TRIALS & DEMONSTRATIONS

Soil Revitalization

The project was initially slated to get underway in the spring of 2020. Unfortunately, due to less than ideal plot conditions at the Yellowhead County Research Site, seeding was impossible. Thankfully, Raymond Chittick has stepped in and offered the use of his fields for the trial. Thank-you, Raymond!

This spring four treatments and one check will be seeded, preferably using a no till method, on five-acre parcels in Lac. Ste. Anne County.

The treatments will include:

- 1) A three-crop rotation of triticale or oats, millet, followed by either triticale or winter wheat
- 2) A multi species mix comprised of at least 20-30% berseem clover
- 3) Year 2 of a three-year rotation of a broad leaf (brassica) and grass (brome)
- 4) A perennial pasture blend
- 5) A conventional cereal monocrop.

Confirmed seed providers at this time include Union Forage, Corns Seeds, and Nutrien Ag. We would like to extend a thank-you to these suppliers for their support on this and many other projects. We wouldn't be able to make these types of projects a success without it!

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Soil Moisture in Forage Systems

This project was initially proposed to begin in the spring of 2020. Due to staffing changes and the spring installation requirement the project was held up until this spring.

This project utilizes weather stations provided by Martin Deerline to show changes in soil moisture at six different depths, to 100cm. Each weather station is equipped to log the temperature, wind, precipitation and leaf wetness at its location.

Weather stations are to be installed in one of each of the following forage or crop types:

- Annual silage
- Perennial silage
- Permanent pasture
- Annual crop

Four cooperators have been identified in each of Woodlands, Leduc, Lac Ste. Anne, and Brazeau counties.

Each cooperator is given access to weather data updated hourly via app. Each producer will receive an infographic at year end that shows the spring and autumn soil moisture profile, crop potential for the next season, and other pertinent information.

Psst..remember that podcast we mentioned earlier? This is the project we talk about in it. Maybe go give it a listen?



Sire-Progeny Links in Commercial Herds

We will be continuing to evaluate the use of the Q-link bull performance test from Quantum Genetix in several herds. This technology allows producers utilizing multi-sire breeding to link sires to their offspring through genetic testing. We are entering the third year of this project, which is set to be complete by early 2023.

Rancher Researcher Technology Adoption

This is a collaborative project being conducted throughout the province by the Applied Research and Forage Associations.

We will be working closely with 2 local producers as they adopt a new technology or production practice on-farm. Impact of the innovations chosen will be documented and monitored, including economic indicators if possible.

Stay tuned for some videos that are in the works highlighting this project and many of the participating producers!

Alberta Soil Health Benchmark Monitoring

Staff from 11 participating organizations have visited fields and pastures across the province to do on site evaluations of compaction and infiltration and to collect samples for lab assessments. 1297 samples have been processed to date (606 in 2019 and 691 in 2020). These samples were collected on 713 fields belonging to 331 farmers and/or ranchers. To date WCFA has sampled 53 sites.

We will be revisiting sites sampled in 2019 this year to determine the impact of management on soil health.

Interested in results from our work in 2020? Our 2020 Annual Report will be available soon!
Keep an eye on your inbox for your copy.

**A small number of copies will be printed & available for pick-up at our office.*