

**Agricultural Meeting Minutes**  
**February 26, 2011**  
**Franklin Homestead**  
**10am-12**

The meeting commenced around 10:45

**Participants:** Sarah Larose, Richmond J Noel, Gary Hanna, Clement Gervais, Ken Spears, Wayne Stanley, Paul Stanley, Heather Darby, Roger Rainville, Eric Young, Jim Cameron, Susan Clark, Greg Godin, Andy Godin, Polly Perkins, Heidi, Valenta, Adrian Rainville, Wayne Fiske, Nancy Fiske, Rolland Rainville, David Breed, Nate Sands, Sue Stanley, Trevor Lewis, Amy Beauregard, Eric Beauregard, Brian Trudell, Ron Paradis, Tim Magnant, Dan Beauregard, Cecile Beauregard, Greg Bouchard, Guy Palardy, Kathy Lavoie, Amber Domina

Jim Cameron made an opening statement, mentioning the public beach and outlining the afternoon.

**Eric Young**

Eric gave a powerpoint presentation on his first year of research in Clay County, NY regarding the effects of tile drainage on nutrient loss in soils. A few questions were posed by the audience of farmers, including one about cover crops. Eric noted that most nutrients are lost from surface runoff, that's where cover crops prove their benefit.

The project attempted to measure how much phosphorous and nitrogen was lost every year through tile drains. Phosphorous was not leaching as much as was predicted, the concentration levels spiked only a few times – correlating with manure application, rain events, and time of year. The research team is going to work more towards measuring water flows to get more accurate data. Nitrogen loss was not presented because there were such low concentrations of N in water lost.

The audience was interested why VT has more of an algae problem than NY. It was predicted that the heavy clay soils in VT play a roll in increased erosion/runoff.

**Heather Darby**

Heather updated the group on happenings with agriculture at UVM Extension. They are starting up a reduced tillage project. The tiller they used last year wasn't properly set up last and there wasn't a great success. No-till is being highly encouraged in the area. UVM Extension will be retrofitting planters for no-till. The problem with no-till farming is that it takes a while for fields to adjust to not being tilled, fields can become "till addicted". You need to gradually introduce the no-till technique to maintain yields.

Cover crops are also being pushed, they take up a lot of nitrogen that can be reincorporated into the soil the next season, rather than lost to erosion.

Recently severe corn diseases have been encroaching on the area and have become a concern. Northern Corn Leaf blight and a mold have been moving into the NY and VT area. Both of these infect the plant, predisposing it to other diseases and microtoxins, and finally kill them prematurely. Resistant corn strands are available and Heather encouraged local farmers to request these for their next planting season. There are also sprays that can be purchased to deter the diseases, but this is a more expensive solution. There were also a number of fields that were lost to slugs. This is probably due to warm winters and high residue fields. Hopefully this cold winter will have taken care of some of this problem, but more drastic measures may have to be taken.

### **Brian Trudell**

Brian is working with Heather Darby involving farm management and water quality. He's concerned with a conservation assistance program involving nutrient management for the most part. He's looking to get in contact with farmers to implement some aspects of the conservation programs.

### **Wayne Fiske & Roger Rainville**

Representing the Farmers Watershed Alliance, Wayne and Roger overviewed programs implemented in 2010. They've gotten funding to exclude livestock from streams, dispose of dead cows, and provide aerators across the state to farmers for a very reasonable rate. They also worked a few stream bank erosion projects that couldn't be funded by other sources. They work to divert clean water around areas that could cause erosion problems. They do water quality protection plans on every project undertaken.

### **Paul Stanley**

Paul went over a stream erosion project involving campers and farmers working together to improve water quality in Lake Carmi. He looked at goals of the FWC from 2006 to put perspective on how far we've come as a community working to improve water quality in Lake Carmi.

### **Panel Discussion**

Before the panel discussion, everyone in attendance introduced themselves to the group and why they came to the meeting. It proved to be a diverse group from different areas and different backgrounds.

Paul Stanley was addressed about interseeding cover crops last year, a project that was funded by the FWC last year. Interseeding involves planting the cover crop seed when the corn has grown 6-8 inches, usually in July. Incorporating the seed proved to be an essential part of the seeding process. Incorporating with interseeding has proven difficult – there is no equipment to do the work. There is a possibility of using a Rowgater, which applies fertilizer and seed with air. This would promote growth, but there is still no incorporation of the seed into the soil. Heather Darby

went over a few techniques tried by UVM Extension; it was found that if you disturb the soil before planting it suffices to get a good catch of the cover crop – but this is nearly impossible to do with interseeding when the corn is already established in the ground. Also, it was found that Winter Rye is one of the more efficient cover crops. Winter Rye stores the most Nitrogen, compared to other cover crops such as Clover, which can then be incorporated into the soil later. The Rye also survives pesticide application at a better rate.

Guy Palardy said a few words about tile drainage. The piping along Dewing fields that steeply sloped down to Lake Carmi helped to save the ditch lining the bottom of the field from eroding. Rather than flashy, erosion-causing drainage, the drainpipe has a steady stream of water that carries fewer nutrients. The big scare with tiling is encroachment on wetlands while NRCS is promoting the preservation of wetlands. In order to get funding for tiling, USDA needs to ‘determine’ the land. The determining process uses aerial photography and a site visit to find out if the land in question for tiling is in fact a wetland or not.

As a conclusion, it was determined that topics of focus for the FWC to pursue would be cover crops and tile drainage.

### **Lunch**

After the presentation and discussion most folks hung around for a free lunch and door prize give away. Over lunch there was further discussion of BMP techniques and people got to know each other.

The meeting concluded at around 2pm (we ran a little late!).