



HMGA News

The newsletter of the Holland Marsh Growers' Association - Volume 7 - March 2010

What's Up for March . . .

- There has been a request to hold ONE more water-taking permit session for those still requiring information and/or needing assistance. Because of scheduling problems at this point, we are looking at early April for this session and will be announcing times in both the next newsletter and at the Muck Crop Conference on March 24. Stay tuned – but there will be one more session. As well, letters from the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority are now, again, being accepted by the Ministry of the Environment after a case of the left hand not knowing what the right hand was doing. In government talk, it means that they weren't talking to each other – but it would appear that the situation has been rectified. If you need a letter, please make sure you drop by Alex Makarenko's shop (Gro-Pak Farms on West Canal Bank Road) and get a copy from him. Or contact Jamie at 905-251-6786 (e-mail: jreaume@rogers.com) and you will get one A.S.A.P.
- The first of four sessions (again, possibly five depending upon interest) for towmotor certification will be held on Tuesday, April 13. Many may be unaware, but due to the graying of legislation between industrial, commercial, and where agriculture fits in all of this, towmotor operators require up-to-date certification through and with the provincial government. In order to ensure compliance and working under the WSIB regulations, the association is offering this program for the cost of \$100 plus applicable taxes for all farmers and their employees – a huge savings over the usual fee of \$300 per person. Again, this is a per person charge and not a per farm charge, so if you have more than one operator that you want certified, you need to take that into consideration. As well, the dates will be spread out until June – but if another course is required, one will be scheduled into July. This is a DAY-LONG program and will certify the operator for three years. There is a limit of 10-12 people per day. The first course will be run at Alex Makarenko's shop – but will then rotate throughout the entire marsh for future dates. Contact Jamie (905-251-6786 / e-mail: jreaume@rogers.com) to register. FIRST CALL, FIRST SERVE BASIS.
- The Greater Toronto and Area Agriculture Action Committee (GTA AAC), of which the Holland Marsh Growers' Association sits on its board as a guest, is holding its Annual General Meeting on March 24 at Black Creek Pioneer Village (1000 Murray Ross Parkway, Toronto) from 6 p.m. until 9 p.m. This is an opportunity to see what other agricultural organizations are doing to improve the needs of farmers in and around the GTA. RSVP to Adrienne Langston (alangston@trca.on.ca).
- And finally, something for the end of March – March 26th, to be precise. Nottawasaga Futures is holding an information session at the Club at Bond Head running from 4 – 9 p.m. (with a free supper) looking at Green Energy Opportunities and then going into break out sessions working on the South Simcoe Agricultural Plan. All are not only encouraged and welcome to be there – but should also know that the Holland Marsh Growers' Association is involved through a number of projects. Your participation is much appreciated. Keep the calendar date open – and see the details on next page.



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Miller Sideroad Waste Facility Remains Opens to Our Farmers

This is just a reminder to all farmers that the Miller Sideroad Landfill is STILL open for TWO MORE WEEKS for use by farmers to remove agricultural waste. The only time that it will NOT BE OPEN is when the site becomes too wet (early thaws or rain).

The dates the Miller Sideroad facility will be open on Saturdays (from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.) are:

March 20 and 27th

59th Annual Muck Conference . . .

Mark this on your calendar – March 24 and 25 – as the 59th Annual Muck Vegetable Growers' Conference returns to the Holy Martyrs of Japan Parish Centre for two days of discussion, debate, and dialogue on research, improvements on the canal system, and what is taking place for farmers working in the Holland Marsh and area – as well as other parts of the province and even some out of province visitors. The Holland Marsh Growers' Association will be the chair for the morning of the 25th, and two presentations on what has been happening with the association will be conducted on the 24th. As always, lunch is free.

It happened again . . .

This year's allotment of funding for the Food Safety and Traceability Initiative came and went – on the same day. In fact, there is, once again, too many submissions and early indications are that some of the projects submitted on opening day will NOT get funding and must be resubmitted for the next round.

Two things to note for Holland Marsh and area farmers – first, at this year's muck conference, the HMGA will be giving out FREE Canadian Horticultural Council food safety manuals (the type required by retailers and food service companies) and

second, will be establishing a food safety information date with both CHC reps (similar to the one held in February) and with OMAFRA (government) reps to access next year's food safety funding. Those dates are still to be determined but will likely occur in April or very early May so as not to cause problems with planting.

By the way, the government program covers half the costs - up to \$25,000 - for the implementation of written food safety programs, implementing a working traceability system, buying and installing equipment for food safety or traceability, or training staff to increase the adoption of food safety and traceability.

Congratulations HMGA . . .

Two of the founders of the Holland Marsh Growers' Association were recently recognized by the Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation. Alex Makarenko and Herman Gasko were presented with an award at the Foundation's Fifth Anniversary celebration – and garnering an opportunity to talk with former Ontario Premier's Bill Davis and David Peterson. The pair were one of five farmer/farmer reps to be presented with an award for their hard work towards making a difference in both the Greenbelted areas and Ontario. Congratulations for your on-going efforts.



Participation requested . . .

There are a few requests for our members – so here it goes: the York Region Food Network, in partnership with a number of other community organizations including the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario and York Region Tourism/Planning, have embarked on developing two Guides to Fresh Food that are focused specifically on the growing South Asian and Chinese populations in York Region. The goals of the project and the guides are:

- * To increase access to local, fresh food and thereby a wider variety of healthy food options.
- * To encourage more individuals and retailers to purchase local food.
- * To enhance and support linkages between farmers and new markets thereby increasing the number of places where produce can be sold
- * To raise public awareness about the importance of local farming and the need to create a more sustainable food system.

York Region Food Network was awarded a grant from the Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation to produce the guides. The guides will direct people to on-farm markets, u-pick farms, farmers' markets and retailers where they can purchase fresh food (fruits, vegetables, cheese and meats), locally grown raised or produced, in the Greenbelt Region of Ontario. Our primary focus is the Greenbelt area in York Region however we appreciate that there are many people farming in close proximity to York Region that will have food available that these communities are seeking so we encourage you to call us for more information about inclusion in the guide.

Our goal is to have the guides completed by June and ready to distribute widely in the Chinese and South Asian communities throughout the 2010 growing season.

At this time we are aiming to get in contact with as many farmers and retailers as possible, who would like to be included in the guides. If you sell directly from an on-farm market or the farmer's market, or to local retailers, we'd love to hear from you.

While there are foods that we generally think about as traditionally Chinese or South Asian such, bok choy or okra for example, the list of foods that are common to and utilized by these communities includes a much wider variety than you might expect. I'll provide a short list here: squash, eggplant, potatoes, tomatoes, cauliflower, apples, strawberries, green pepper, melons, green chili, beef, chicken, goat or lamb. The list goes on but I think you get the picture. We want you to know that if you are growing or raising food in the region, much of it is likely being sought and consumed by these cultural groups, and we would love to talk to you further.

If you would like more information or would like to be considered for inclusion in the guides, please contact Yvonne Kelly at 905-967-0428 ext 205 or Catherine Cook at ext 203. We can also be reached by email: yvonnek@yrfn.ca or catherinec@yrfn.ca Ideally, our goal is to identify most of the farmers and retailers who want to be included in the guide by the end of March. However we are happy to hear from those interested in being included in the guide, right into April as there may still be time and room to allow more entries. There is no fee for inclusion in the guide. Our goal is simply to increase access for people to local food and to make connections that will hopefully increase the markets for the food you are already making available in York Region.

Participation requested – Part 2 . . .

Attached with this newsletter is a letter from the Ontario Agricultural Sustainability Coalition to all farmers. Taka read – please and thank you.



OMB/Peaker Plant Update . . .

Just a reminder that the Ontario Municipal Board will be meeting for its first of 10 day sittings on March 31 at 10:30 a.m. at the King Township Council Chambers. Both the association and a farmer member will be participating – and it would be an ideal opportunity for you, as both an interested party and taxpayer, to see how this turns out.

Other dates set aside for the OMB hearing are: April 1, 6, 7, 8, 9, 13, 14, 20, and 21.

An evening with . . .

Bet you thought I forgot to include the date mentioned on the first page – but, I didn't. On March 26, the Christian Farmers Federation, Holland Marsh Growers' Association, and the Simcoe County Federation of Agriculture in partnership with Nottawasaga Futures, the South Simcoe Economic Alliance and the Government of Canada are hosting an information session on the Ontario Green Energy Act followed by a dinner and working session on advancing the objectives of the South Simcoe Agriculture Action Plan developed by the farming community in 2009. Six committees have been created to resolve the issues identified in the Action Plan, advance the opportunities developed, and foster the support and cooperation of the municipal, provincial, and federal governments in resolving issues that create barriers to the future success of the farming sector. There is no charge – and it includes dinner.

Date: Friday, March 26, 2010

First session: 2 – 3:30 p.m.

Second session: 3:30 – 9 p.m.

Location: The Club at Bond Head

RSVP to Martha Marton Nottawasaga Futures at (705) 435-1540 or martha@nottawasaga.com

Bradford Farmers' Market . . .

The Holland Marsh Growers' Association is once again putting a push on for participation in the local farmers' market in Bradford as a means of interacting with people, putting a farmer face to the Holland Marsh and area, and earning more than just a few extra bucks. This year, the market will be located at the Bradford Arena and Community Centre (as construction will be ripping up the roadway outside of the Go Station. This is a community venture, by the way, with full support from Bradford-West Gwillimbury council and its economic department. This year, in fact, the market will start later – and finish later, to accommodate the unique growing season within the Holland Marsh (May 22- October 30). There are still a few spots open – and the association fully endorses the idea of working together as a group to lessen the load of manning and preparing for the market. If you have any questions, please contact Jamie at 905-251-6786.

Quick website . . .

Farmers looking for that consumer relationship, whether it be with a chef, restaurant, or food service provider can go to www.greebeltfresh.ca.

On a sad note . . .

As many of you have likely heard, Kevin Vander Kooi, of the Muck Crop Research Station, was recently diagnosed with cancer and has begun treatments. Kevin has been a part of the marsh for decades – and will remain so. Words of encouragement, prayers and thoughts can go directly to him at:

[www.carepages.com/carepages/
KevinVKKicksCancer](http://www.carepages.com/carepages/KevinVKKicksCancer)