

IN THE TRENCHES

March 2009

"Drainage Doesn't Cost - IT PAYS!"

www.drainage.org

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From the President's Desk

Fellow Members:

I am honoured to represent the LICO members as your new president for the next two years. I hope I can meet your expectations.

A little bit of my background may be of interest for those who don't know me. In 1979 I became a partner in Roth Drainage Limited and started a business in southern Alberta. I was married in March 1979 to Gwen and we moved out west (including all the equipment) the beginning of April. To this day Gwen still reminds me that it was not much of a honeymoon trip! I did rectify that a few years later with a trip to Hawaii. With starting a family and working mostly away from home, we decided to give up the business in Alberta and move back to Ontario in 1984. We relocated to Seaforth with the acquisition of Postil Drainage of Clinton, Ontario. In 1997 we moved to our present location in Blyth. We have one son, Mike, who is a partner in the business, and one daughter, Christine, who is in her 4th year at Waterloo University. Gwen is currently working for M.D.L. Doors in Brussels as a receptionist.

With another great convention under our belts, I would like to thank the following people:

To Franklin Kains for putting together an absolutely great and interesting two day event.

To John Johnston for all his dedication to LICO as Secretary Treasurer (his wealth of knowledge makes those of us on the Board look good!).

To Don Lobb for his passion as an Environmental Advocate.

To the LICO Executive for accepting their positions to be on the Board

With all the environmental policies out there, we have to make sure we are all well informed about them. If you have had any experience with these policies (good or bad) please let us know so we can relay this on or maybe put it in our next 'In the Trenches' edition. With the challenging fall we all experienced in 2008, it looks like we all will be reaping the benefits in 2009 with a very busy year. If you have any concerns or comments, please contact anyone of your Executive members.

Thank you,
Gerald

Lines from Lambton - Dean Hodgson

Lambton County got a break from the steady winter weather with a mid-February thaw. Some warm, sunny days preceded a heavy rainfall and this slower thawing prevented any major flooding problems. There was some flooding downstream in Wallaceburg because the Conservation Authority forgot to close the multi-million dollar dam at Duthil. Of course the peak problems occurred over the weekend when nobody works but first thing Monday morning they were on the job. Though their negligence may have caused some inconvenience to the people downstream in Wallaceburg, with water flowing in the streets, they soon had everything under control. Possibly it's not all their fault as the CA office is in Strathroy, approximately 60 miles from the Duthil Dam and the water came up swiftly on a weekend. How were they to know?

Though the CA's, MNR, DFO and MOE are very adept at enforcing all the escalating rules and regulations on rural property owners, they are not so good at attending to their own limited responsibilities. In Sarnia's Canatara Park coyotes are killing the ducks and geese at the Children's Animal Farm. When the City asked MNR for help they were told 'we should learn to learn to live with them'. Canatara Park is the summer playground for Lambton's children. What is MNR's responsibility regarding these wild creatures?

As Ken Jaques said, after returning from the annual LICO Conference, "First fish became more important than farmers but now, with the 'Endangered Species Act', wild animals are more important than people". Ken felt the Drainage Conference featured too many new government rules and not enough about the value of drainage. The municipal ditches were constructed to drain farmland and produce food not provide jobs for bureaucrats. Let's get some positive news out to the consumers about drains and farmers. Articles in the London Free Press revealed one of the top executives of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans has been busy spending our erosion control funding while attending many meetings and conferences all over the world. It was disclosed through the 'Access to Information Act' that one high ranking official of the DFO has spent over \$400,000 traveling in the last 3 years. This could have built a lot of berms, protected a lot of fragile soil and provided work for many drainage contractors. Her favourite cities to study how to protect our fish in the farm ditches were New York, Paris and Rome. The next time your ditch maintenance job is held up by a DFO inspector you can be assured his boss is busy protecting our fish somewhere in the world.

I have noticed the rapid thawing of all the snow cover caused some serious erosion in many no-till fields. Those little water rills that follow the natural contours across a field get a little deeper year after year. Because those little rills are never disturbed by cultivation they provide an easy route for fast flowing water to gouge ugly ravines across farm fields during these flash floods. These flash floods seem to be occurring much more frequently. We must learn to protect our soils by installing berms, cover crops or other methods to slow these fast flows during these unexpected floods. Most tile drain contractors could install berms and inlets to help protect our fragile soils when draining the farm fields but the extra cost is often not warranted. There is no incentive from the public sector to help the farmer pay for such projects. Farmers are caught between a rock and a hard place. They must cut back on cultivation to save fuel costs but there is no financial return for protecting our soils. Some of that DFO travel money could save a lot of erosion.

Some Lambton County contractors were out working in the field the week after the big February thaw and many farmers were ploughing cornstalks. However, most found the frosty conditions too hard on equipment. Many contractors have unfinished jobs as a result of the early winter weather last fall and would like to finish some before spring.

Congratulations go out to Ken Jaques and Larry Mansfield who both become senior citizens this year. Ken will turn 65 in May and Larry in August. Lots of good years left in these two yet but I told them to remember, 'Life begins at 65'. The best is yet to come.

A Watershed Moment For South Nation – Cornwall Standard-Freeholder, February 4, 2009

Don't let the often murky waters of S, D and G's rivers and streams fool you. There's a large number and variety of fish in them - a confirmation that's delighted research staff at South Nation Conservation. "The South Nation River watershed is definitely not deteriorating," said biologist Adriana Hoogenboom, responding to the assumption that widespread agricultural practices has taken a toll on fish populations. "We've really been excited and surprised at how many sensitive species there are. "The water is not clear, but that's just because of the soil types (on the bottom and banks), which are mostly clay." During their sampling of each locale they discovered seven species of fish not previously identified in the watershed. Among five new minnow species, staff discovered the cutlip, which is a species at risk. The other minnows are: brassy, central stone roller, eastern silvery and finescale dace. There were also two unusual finds: the American brook lamprey and the round gobi. The brook lamprey is an indication of pockets of clear water in the watershed. Identifying fish species and their habitats will provide scientific data for future watershed planning, Hoogenboom said. For example, she said OSAP data indicates that large predators such as pike were using small tributary streams to spawn, which might require measures such as buffers to protect this habitat. Article ID# 1418677

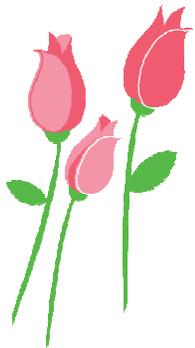
Marc Gagne, Drainage Superintendent, City of Ottawa, Comment - Just to let you know that this section of the South Nation River was constructed as a MUNICIPAL DRAIN in 1992 and 1993 under the report of an Engineer (McNeely Engineering Consultants Ltd.) 1991. This River would flood several times every year and would cost the landowners thousands in lost claims. It seems funny that this MUNICIPAL DRAIN produces all kinds fish after the construction of the drain, which received approval of the SNCA and MNR and each funded a third towards the cost. Today it's like pulling teeth to get a new engineers report through the system with the Conservation Authorities new regulations and the DFO using the new MTO protocol, the timing of these new reports is between 3 and 5 years and the cost is at least triple of what they used to be.

Editor's Comment – It would have been interesting to compare this test to the fish species before the drain was cleaned in 1992-93.

Scholarship aids teen's agriculture dreams – Niagara this week, March 11, 2009

The Drainage Superintendents Association of Ontario has recognized a Niagara student with an educational bursary.

On February 16, Grimsby resident Sarah Keizer was presented with the association's Ralph Bradley Memorial Bursary by the Niagara chapter. The presentation was made by Grimsby Mayor Bob Bentley. Niagara chapter Kris Franklin said the chapter was impressed with Sarah's application and her "clear sense of direction in the pursuit of your chosen career in the Horticulture and Agriculture programs at Ridgetown College of the University of Guelph." The bursary is for the 2008-2009 post-secondary scholastic year.



The year's at the spring
 And day's at the morn;
 Morning's at seven;
 The hillside's dew-pearled;
 The lark's on the wing;
 The snail's on the thorn;
 God's in His heaven -
 All's right with the world!
 ~Robert Browning



Patio Set Winner!!

Congratulations goes out to the winner of the ADS/Hancor Patio Set - Melissa Walker from Walker Wright Drainage in Lindsay.



U.S. State Offers Tax Credits for Farmers to Fight Soil Erosion – (Excerpts from Ontario Farmer, January 13, 2009)

Pennsylvania is offering its farmers more than \$106 million to control erosion and sediments entering watercourses in the state.

This year, 231 on-farm conservation practices have been completed and more than \$1.6 million in REAP tax credits have been awarded through the program. The projects represent a total investment of more than \$23 million by farmers.

Farmers can receive tax credits up to \$150,000 per agricultural operation for 50 or 75 per cent of the total cost of a conservation project, depending on the best management practice implemented.

Farmers may also qualify for a 50 per cent tax credit to purchase no-till planting equipment.

Ontario Cosmetic Pesticides Ban To Take Effect

Ontario's cosmetic pesticides ban will take effect April 22, 2009. The specifics of the ban are detailed in Ontario Regulation 63/09 made under the Pesticides Act which has been amended by the Cosmetic Pesticides Ban Act, 2009. Ministry of the Environment has a separate page on their website entitled Banning Pesticides. Recommended action:

- * Invite a representative from MOE to speak on this subject at your next meeting.
- * Read the information on the MOE website and factsheets and make sure any pesticide applicator you hire has the appropriate permits.
- * Share the information with your neighbours.
- * Make do the best that you can and remember we are about 3/4 of the way down the list of "In Balance with Nature" and there is no turning back from the abyss at this point.

Report on the 2009 LICO Convention - Franklin Kains, Conference Coordinator

Another annual conference has come and gone and the consensus was that it was a very successful affair. There was good attendance at all presentations despite a dip in overall attendance of approximately 10%.

There were 12 speakers in all with the conference theme of Drainage and the Environment. The following are highlights of 4 of the presentations:

- Robert Broughton, Emeritus Professor at McGill University talked about his experiences over the last 30 years with controlled drainage and subsurface irrigation on 5 farms in Quebec and Eastern Ontario. His conclusion was that with the right conditions sub-irrigation could add 10 to 30% increase in yield on sandy soils. A primary requirement will be a good source of irrigation water. He also suggested using the plow blade used for installing 6 or 8-inch diameter pipes will create a wider opening that allows loose permeable upper subsoil to fall down over the 4 inch pipe. This can provide better seepage conditions for both drainage and sub-irrigation installations.
- Continuing on the same theme, Mark Sunohara manages a study on 2 sites in the South Nation River basin that is looking at the effects of controlled drainage on the quality of the water discharged. This is part of a cross country study of the impact of various Best Management Practices (controlled drainage being one of them) on water quality and is funded by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) and Ducks Unlimited Canada. He reported that on one site, the controlled drainage was credited with reducing the discharge of water volume by 30%, of ammonia by 85% and of nitrates by 35% with an accompanying increase in corn yield of 10%. Certainly very positive results to date.
- Valerie M'Garry is a lawyer from Delaware (near London) who had a number of cases involving legal problems related to drainage. Her main message was that you may be found responsible for your work many years after construction has been completed. Her warning is that when you are down in the ditch with a shovel, it is easy to let the paper trail slip. Nobody is going to remember the details of how construction decisions were made or who said or did not say what 5 or 10 years later after the fact. Get change orders on paper. Follow up on verbally agreed upon changes with an email to the farmer, engineer or township. It can save big problems later.
- Bob Steiss of OMAFRA talked about the development of the Rural Drainage Mapping Website which allows a contractor to determine on-line from his office if there is any record of drainage works at a particular site. His on-line demonstration in the exhibition hall during the coffee breaks drew a large crowd of contractors who were seeing a good value with this tool.

The tour this year went to the RM Classic Cars at Blenheim. Here we saw over 50 vintage and classic cars some fully restored, some awaiting restoration. The highlight was a 1963 Ferrari bright red (naturally) race car which had been driven by the legendary Phil Hill, valued at \$8,000,000. Some of us expected for that money it should be able to lay tile.

So, another successful conference. Good speakers, good accommodations, good weather and above all - good company.

See Next Page for Photos from the Conference!

Conference Photos!!



Guest Speaker Bob Broughton



Conference Attendees



President Gerald Neeb and his wife, Gwen

My Cup Has Overflowed

I've never made a fortune,
And it's probably too late now.
But I don't worry about that much,
I'm happy anyhow,

And as I go along life's way,
I'm reaping better than I sowed.
I'm drinking from my saucer,
'Cause my cup has overflowed.

Haven't got a lot of riches,
and sometimes the going's tough
But I've got loving ones all around me,
and that makes me rich enough.

I thank God for his blessings,
and the mercies He's bestowed.
I'm drinking from my saucer,
'Cause my cup has overflowed.

I remember times when things went wrong,
My faith wore somewhat thin.
But all at once the dark clouds broke,
And the sun peeped through again.

So Lord, help me not to gripe,
About the tough rows I have hoed.
I'm drinking from my saucer,
'Cause my cup has overflowed.

If God gives me strength and courage,
When the way grows steep and rough.
I'll not ask for other blessings,
I'm already blessed enough.

And may I never be too busy,
To help others bear their loads.
While I keep drinking from my saucer,
'Cause my cup has overflowed.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

January 20 - 21, 2010

LICO Conference

Best Western Lamplighter Inn
591 Wellington Rd.,
London, Ontario N6C 4R3

LICA Summer Meeting

July 15 - 18, 2009

Holiday Inn—Airport
Des Moines, IA
(630) 548-1984

Soil & Water Conservation Society

Annual Meeting

July 11 - 15, 2009

Dearborn, Michigan

Canadian Water & Wastewater Association

Conference on Water Efficiency & Conservation

October 13 - 16, 2009

Victoria, B.C.

e-mail: itsui@cwwa.ca



Change of Vocation

A gynecologist had become fed up with malpractice insurance and HMO paperwork and was burned out. Hoping to try another career where skillful hands would be beneficial, he decided to become a mechanic.

He went to the local technical college, signed up for evening classes, attended diligently, and learned all he could. When the time for the practical exam approached, the gynecologist prepared carefully for weeks and completed the exam with tremendous skill. When the results came back, he was surprised to find that he had obtained a score of 150%.

Fearing an error, he called the instructor, saying, "I don't want to appear ungrateful for such an outstanding result, but I wonder if there is an error in the grade." The instructor said, "During the exam, you took the engine apart perfectly, which was worth 50% of the total mark. You put the engine back together again perfectly, which is also worth 50% of the mark." After a pause, the instructor added, "I gave you an extra 50% because you did it all through the muffler, which I've never seen done in my entire career."

Cropland Drainage and the Clean Water Act - Don Lobb, Environmental Advocate

At the 2009 LICO Conference in January, Ian Smith of Ministry of the Environment and lead for the Clean Water Act discussed its implications for cropland drainage. His assessment was that the primary concern would be water quality at drain pipe discharge and accelerated flow that results from open ditches. This would be an issue where municipalities draw drinking water from "intakes" in rivers and lakes. Under the Clean Water Act there is to be tight control over any activity that could impact water within a two hour time-of-travel to the intake and somewhat less control as the distance increases. Time-of-travel is the time water takes to reach a water intake during a storm event. In some cases this could be miles.

Where cropland drainage exists or is contemplated within a "time-of-travel/intake protection zone", land managers need to find ways to protect water quality and to minimize flow rates. LICO contractors have an opportunity to help here but a shift to surface water management may be a priority for the CWA. Any practice that improves drain water discharge quality or reduces surface runoff will be welcome. If the CWA initiatives follow the science then cropland drainage by itself should be viewed as a Best Management Practice (BMP) because it does extend stream flow and does reduce silt and nutrient runoff and it does result in filtration as moisture moves to drain pipes. The BMP manual for Cropland Drainage that is now being produced should be most helpful in identifying practices that benefit our water supply and the environment as well as crop production.

Our challenge is to work with farmers in encouraging and implementing practices that support the objectives of the CWA. Perhaps LICO contractors now need to position themselves as *Cropland Water Managers* (rather than drainage contractors). The need has arrived.