

IN THE TRENCHES

September 2011

"Drainage Doesn't Cost - IT PAYS!"

www.drainage.org

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From the President's Desk

Fellow members,

As always, summer has gone too quickly. The sure-tell signs of autumn are here, the days are shorter, the leaves are starting to turn, and my phone is ringing of the hook.

I hope everyone had a chance to relax and is well rested for the autumn work. Commodity prices are high, crops in my local area look good, and it appears that farmers are feeling optimistic.

We were working on the corner of a busy road today, and at one time I looked up to discover six pick-ups sitting at the top end of the field. I admitted to my Dad that I was nervous to approach the waiting farmers - I knew that if they were looking to get work done, I couldn't do it until next year. I realize this is not the worst problem I could have. We are grateful for a busy year.

As we all juggle too many jobs into a short harvest season, the planning for the 2012 convention is in full swing. Early registration details will be forthcoming in the December newsletter. Franklin Kains has been putting together ideas for speakers and the lineup promises to be informative and thought provoking. My lovely wife, Melissa, has been organizing a great ladies program to keep our wives entertained.

Things have been quiet on the LICO front. Our next meeting is scheduled for September 12, 2011 in Guelph. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact any member of the executive.

Wishing you a safe and successful fall and a good end to another drainage season!!

Greg Walker



Tiling Machines Running All-Out – (Excerpts from Ontario Farmer, August 20, 2011)

Ontario farmers are investing heavily in tile drainage.

The wet April and May also prompted farmers to finally invest in drainage for wet fields and spots.

Shirley Roth of Roth Drainage Ltd said farmers “are realizing that it’s a good investment”. Roth said they are now getting increased interest from farmers who want to double up tiles in already-drained fields – from 60-foot spacing to 30, from 50 to 25. “They can see the rows from variable crop growth and realize the benefits of doubling up.”

The industry has been installing more than 100 million tile-feet of drainage every year for more than 10 years, according to statistics gathered by the Land Improvement Contractors of Ontario.

Tile drainage companies are expensive operations today because most have large machines equipped with GPS (global positioning system) to install drains to precise depths and spacings.

GPS equipment is also used to map fields for drainage, doing in hours what use to take days and with greater accuracy.

Despite increased costs for equipment, plastic tile and fuel, drainage contractors “are finding efficiencies” and on an inflation-adjusted basis, are charging less per tile-foot today than ever, says Sid Vander Veen, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.



Production Roundup – (Excerpts from Ontario Farmer, August 16, 2011)

Spending two or three weeks with wet feet isn’t good for your health. Judging from the harvest so far, it isn’t good for winter wheat yields either.

While some growers are seeing yields well above 100 bushels, others are struggling to make half that total.

The difference: the amount and duration of water lying in fields this spring. Where a little less rain fell or drainage was better, yields have been high.

If you have articles, events or notes of interest you wish to add to this newsletter, please send your submissions (not more than **225** words) to the following:

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OMAFRA Drainage Coordinator's Report – Sid Vander Veen

Licensing and Loan Updates:

As of September 1, 2011, \$1.62 million has been loaned to 72 applicants under the Tile Loan Program. At this time last year, we had issued \$2.01 million in loans. With a very wet spring, the slower pace is not surprising. However, we do expect that it will pick up significantly. The Tile Loan Program's 6% interest rate was set in 2004 and is fixed for the 10-year term of the loan. A recent article in a farm publication incorrectly quoted the rate as 8%.

In Ontario, there are currently 93 licensed tile drainage businesses, 170 licensed machines and 346 licensed machine operators.

Water Management Engineer:

After two years as Water Management Engineer with OMAFRA, Andrew Jamieson has taken a new position with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada in Guelph as the Senior Irrigation and Drainage Engineer. I expect that we will continue to see Andrew at upcoming LICO conventions in his new role.

Tim Brook is now the Water Management Engineer at OMAFRA. Tim obtained a Bachelor of Applied Science Degree in Civil/Environmental Engineering from the University of Windsor in 1995. He immediately continued his studies and obtained a Master of Science Degree in Engineering from the University of Guelph. In 1997, he began his career as a project engineer working for an engineering consulting firm in Canada and the United States focusing on the design and construction of various water related infrastructure projects. He is a licensed Professional Engineer in Ontario and Michigan. Tim began working for the Ontario Government in 2002, and has held various positions including Drinking Water Inspector, District Engineer and most recently as the Water Management Engineer with OMAFRA.

Primary and Advance Drainage Courses:

The Primary and Advanced Drainage courses are being offered this winter, but the dates have not been set. However, we are in the process of re-designing these courses to include:

- stated and measurable learning objectives;
- new and revised content;
- new and redesigned exam questions;
- a standardised process to determine course equivalencies.

The goal of the Primary Drainage Course is to provide learners with the knowledge and skills necessary to establish drainage slopes, grade changes and depths, and to ensure contractors installation complies with the *Drainage Guide for Ontario*.

The goal of the Advanced Drainage Course is to provide learners with the knowledge and skills required to assess, plan and design agricultural subsurface drainage works.

Learners will gain a basic understanding of tile drainage design, so that installation will comply with the *Drainage Guide for Ontario*.

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OMAFRA Drainage Coordinator's Report - (Cont'd. from page 3)

Premier's Award:

The Premier's Award for Agri-Food Innovation Excellence Program is accepting applications now until November 14, 2011. The program recognizes innovators who contribute to the success of Ontario's agri-food sector. Details of the 2011 Premier's Award program are available on the Ministry's website at www.ontario.ca/agrifoodinnovation. The Program Guidebook and Application Form provide a complete overview of the program, its eligibility criteria, and the selection process. Eligible applicants could receive one of:

- the Premier's Award of \$75,000
- the Minister's Award of \$50,000
- one of three Leaders in Innovation Awards of \$25,000 each; or
- one of 45 provincial awards of \$5,000 each

Eligible applicants include primary producers / farmers, processors and agri-food organizations. Unlike previous years, applications to the permanent program will be accepted direct from processors and agri-food organizations.

I know there are creative, innovative people in the tile drainage industry and it's time to recognize them. Identify these people to your LICO Board of Directors and encourage the Board to nominate them for the Award. Here are some ideas:

- A contractor who uses new tile drainage concepts to improve water quality, e.g. dispersion sandwiches (tile outlet directed through a buried wood chip deposit).
- A pipe manufacturer that introduces a new process into agricultural pipe manufacturing that improves efficiency or improves recycling efforts
- A contractor who designs and installs a comprehensive surface and subsurface drainage system to capture water and recycle it onto the agricultural land.
- A tile drainage machine invention that improves installation efficiency or reduces costs.

Tile Crushers:

Normally, near the end of the installation of a lateral, the plow will be stopped and someone will cut the pipe and insert an endcap. The plow operator would then finish the installation of the lateral and would move on to the next run.

Some contractors are incorporating tile cutter/crushers onto their plow. This feature allows the plow operator, without leaving the machine, to cut the pipe and crush the end of it. The assumption is that the crushed pipe end, once in the ground will seal and not allow sediment movement into the pipe.

The advantage of this feature is that it eliminates the need for a person to be available on the ground to manually perform the task of cutting the pipe and inserting an endcap. The pipe cutter/crusher has been used for about 10 years in Michigan, but there is no documented research that shows that the crushed end will seal adequately.

Publication 29, the Drainage Guide for Ontario requires endcaps to be installed at the end of pipes. At this time, we do not endorse the crushing of pipes as a substitute for endcaps, but we also will not be actively pursuing it as a deficiency. If problems arise in the future or complaints are made, we will follow the recommendations as set out in the Drainage Guide.

Lines from Lambton - Dean Hodgson

Weather has been the dominant factor here in Lambton County all of this year. From a long, cold, snowy winter into a long, cold, wet spring turning to the hottest, driest July on record, we finally got a break in the weather in the month of August.

Last winter we had the blizzard of the century that put Sarnia and Lambton on the national news. At least the blizzard proved we have friendly, resourceful people here in Lambton County who provided help and shelter for stranded motorists. Though the OPP and the Military took most of the credit it was actually the people of rural Lambton who rose to the occasion and we like to see them receive at least some of the praise.

One positive venture that has developed because of the terrible storm is the introduction of a new program combining the County, the Ministry of Transportation and the St. Clair Conservation Authority. Property owners will be approached to plant windbreaks along the highways to catch the drifting snow. This plan was actually in use many years ago to replace the labour intensive snow fencing program along area highways but I believe it was abandoned in favour of more and larger snow removal equipment. I read of an even better plan in the Ontario Farmer where farmers were being approached to leave several rows of corn stalks adjacent to the road allowance to act as temporary snow fence.

In spite of the terrible weather Lambton County farmers eventually seeded much of their crop land. Most of the sugar beets were not seeded until the end of May and many of the fields are quite spotty with many drowned out areas from the heavy June floods. Sugar beets are a risky crop and though Lambton County growers have had several very successful seasons, this year has been a tremendous challenge. Though much of the corn was seeded in early June and then subjected to various amounts of flooding, it is surprising how well the majority of the corn fields look in mid-August. Soybeans were left for last and many of the estimated 250,000 acres were planted in late June but again this crop looks very good in late August. Most of the winter wheat crop had come through a tough winter and a cold, wet spring in good condition. However, the hot dry weather in July was the determining factor and most yields were below expectations. All and all the year 2011 has been a trying time for Lambton County farmers.

With all the setbacks in seeding plans and then the torrents of rain drowning out many fields there has been no shortage of work for Lambton County tile drain contractors. Many farmers changed their long range plans and tiled fields because of necessity. Although there has been a lot of drainage work for County contractors, they often have had to jump from here to there and work where soil conditions allowed. Though contractors are busy, it has been a trying year and some customers are unhappy because of these unplanned changes. As a result of this weather I have not talked to many happy contractors this year but as always, they just keep on trucking.

On August 2, 2011 the International Joint Commission studying the water levels on the Great Lakes presented some proposals to slow the flow into the St. Clair River. Each proposal was shot down by a group of area protesters who felt it is best to sit back and let Mother Nature solve our problems. As a result of this organized opposition no action was taken and the Commission went home happy, as they were told to do nothing.

The falling leaves drift by the window
The autumn leaves of red and gold
I see your lips, the summer kisses
The sun-burned hands I used to hold
Since you went away the days grow long
And soon I'll hear old winter's song
But I miss you most of all my darling
When autumn leaves start to fall.

Johnny Mercer

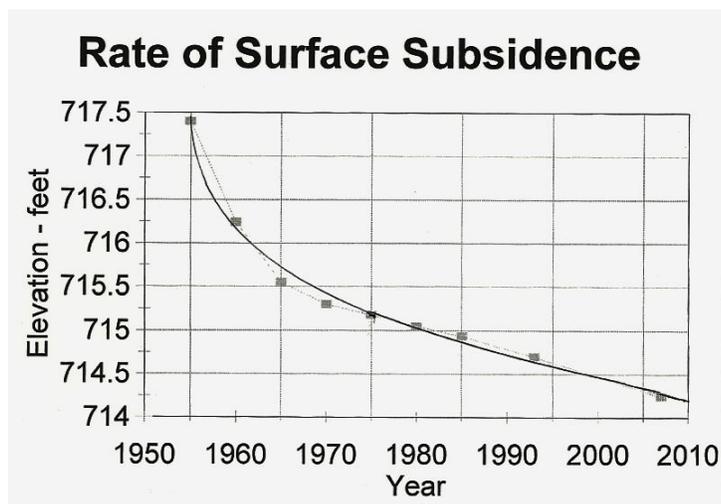
Drainage Of Organic Soils – Ross W. Irwin

Peat, or organic soils float because their density is less than water. They stay in place because of other binding ingredients which build over time. So, the Holland Marsh developed as a backwater where the runoff from higher ground slowed when it entered the Lake Simcoe water level. Trees and vegetation grew and died over time and the soil elevation was built up. Then in 1925 s beginning was made in reclaiming the marsh for vegetable production. The ground water level at the time approached the surface elevation. The marsh was contained within a circular dyke and it was pumped down to a manageable elevation. When water was removed from the profile the surface elevation began to shrink.

In 1955 we began a program of monitoring the loss of elevation (shrinkage of the peat) and the last measurement was in 2006. A plot of the loss of surface elevation is shown here. Notice we have lost three feet of elevation, indeed many areas within the marsh have lost their organic soil altogether.

Also from the sketch the prediction equation for soil loss agrees with most of the points. Some scatter occurs when the survey is done just after a rain, or very dry weather.

The message is when contractors are asked to drain swamp organic areas the life of the area is very dependent on the cultural practices to follow. Many fields just end up as dirty mineral soils.



Things I Have Learned

I've learned.... That the best classroom in the world is at the feet of an elderly person.

I've learned.... That when you're in love, it shows.

I've learned.... That just one person saying to me, 'You've made my day!'... makes my day.

I've learned.... That having a child fall asleep in your arms is one of the most peaceful feelings in the world.

I've learned.... That being kind is more important than being right.

I've learned.... That you should never say no to a gift from a child.

I've learned.... That no matter how serious your life requires you to be, everyone needs a friend to act goofy with.

Silage Leachate Threatens Water – (Excerpts from Ontario Farmer, September 6, 2011)

Silage leachate is an issue for all farmers who have silage.

Leachate can come from all forms of silage storage: bunkers, upright silos, bags and piles.

Leachate is an organic liquid that is formed when water, or in some cases pressure from the structure, comes in contact with silage and runs off.

It can be formed as a part of silage storage, especially if the corn or alfalfa is harvested too wet.

The other source of leachate is rain water coming in contact with silage and carrying nutrients with it.

This leachate has a high biological oxygen demand, BOD. If silage leachate is allowed to reach surface water, oxygen in the water will be consumed so quickly that anything living in the water, including fish, could immediately be in peril.

It is estimated that one gallon of silage leachate can lower the oxygen content of 10,000 gallons of river water to such an extent that there is a chance for fish kill. Leachate also can cause algal blooms and it can produce high levels of ammonia.

Leachate can increase water's acidity due to its high nitrate-nitrogen levels. There can also be a distasteful odour. Wells located within 150 feet to silage storage should be routinely checked for contamination such as nitrates and E. coli.

GPS Threatened By Huge American Broadband Project – (Excerpts from Ontario Farmer, July 5, 2011)

A company called LightSquared plans to create a 40,000 tower cellular 4G network across most of the United States, providing exceptional coverage across the country.

The company last fall launched one of the largest commercial satellites ever and its new system would combine satellite and ground stations to provide greater coverage.

However, it had been given mobile satellite spectrum immediately next to that of the Global Positioning System.

LightSquared would also have used very powerful ground-based transmissions which the organization Save Our GPS worried could cause severe interference to hundreds of millions of GPS receivers.

LightSquared also has a Canadian office and plans to offer service in Canada.

Tests by Deere & Company showed that LightSquared's signal massively interfered with John Deere's GPS receiver equipment. Deere receivers registered impact of and interference by LightSquared signal as far away as 22 miles from a transmitter.

LightSquared has maintained that it wouldn't launch its service until the GPS issue was solved and it believes there could be a technical fix for the problem.

The U.S. Federal Communications Commission also said it wouldn't allow LightSquared to start up its system until the problem was solved.

Williams Farm Drainage - Dean Hodgeson

Sherman Williams (1926-2009) was one of the best known tile drain contractors in Lambton County. As reported in an article in the Drainage Contractor in 2006, he was the first contractor in North America to use the trenchless drainage method. Sherman was an entrepreneur and an innovator and he built his own dozer plow in 1969.

Sherman Williams was born and lived all of his life on the Williams' Century farm at lot 26, con. 1 SER, in Warwick Township. His son Mark is now the fifth generation of this pioneer family to own the farm and Mark is also the present owner and operator of Sherman Williams Enterprises Limited. Sherman Williams married Susana Woolvett from Arkona and they raised three children, Bob, Mark and Barbara on the Williams pioneer farm. Sherman was always an optimist, looking for opportunities on and off the farm. As a young man he drove gravel trucks for wages but soon purchased his own three ton stake truck and hauled grain and livestock for area farmers. During the 1950's while Sherman was trucking clay drain tile he noticed there was a shortage of tile drain contractors to install the tile. In 1956 Sherman and Sue bought a Buckeye '302' tiling machine from Rod Inglis of Warwick Village. Rod sent an operator along with the machine and Sherman also hired his cousin Ed Williams. Soon Sherman and Ed were able to operate the machine on their own. As the tiling business grew busier over the years, Sherman hired and trained many future tile drain contractors. Some of these were Lloyd Hendrickx, Frank and Paul VanBree and Frank Rombouts. Ken Werden and Ted Hay are still working for Williams Farm Drainage and their fathers were also familiar names in Lambton tiling.

In the meantime Sherman continued expanding his business, buying a small dozer to backfill tile drains and level off some deep ridges. Next Sherman purchased a drag line and became involved in constructing municipal drains. In the 1960's Sherman expanded into land clearing and other types of municipal work. Sherman had also kept his trucking business and purchased a float to move machinery from one location to another. In 1964 Sherman and Sue traveled to Toronto and obtained a unique PCV Class 'K' license which allowed them to move extra wide and heavy loads. This special permit was to provide yet another career for Sherman in the years ahead. About the same time Sherman was extremely busy with so many irons in the fire. In 1963 he sold the Buckeye tiling machine to Frank Van Bree, who wanted his own business. Frank went on to establish one of the most successful drainage businesses in Lambton County.

Sherman's two sons, Bob and Mark Williams grew up working on the farm, operating heavy equipment and both were involved in the expanding business. But soon the boys were off to school and Bob went on to become a Civil Engineer. Bob operated his own business, Warwick Equipment, out of Stratford, Ontario, until 2009, when he sold that business and retired to Maple Ridge, B.C. Mark went into the world of finance and is a certified broker and financial adviser working out of London. However, Mark always stayed in touch with the home farm and was available to help out whenever needed in the family business.

Although Sherman enjoyed the challenge of the municipal bidding wars, he and Sue also missed the quiet rural life. When Sherman heard of a new trenchless tile method, his inquisitive mind was intrigued. Sherman and Mark visited Dr. Jim Fouss down in Columbus, Ohio and there Sherman consulted and exchanged ideas with Dr. Fouss while also taking some measurements. Returning home, Sherman went right to work building the very first Williams Dozer Plow. With advice from Dr. Fouss and encouragement from such men as Alex Rivard of Tilbury and Lowell Kraft of Pigeon, Michigan, Sherman built and operated the first dozer plow in 1969.

Sherman Williams returned to the farm drainage business with plastic tile, laser grades and found that the trenchless tiling method was the way of the future. He and Mark operated that first plow until 1980 when they built their present plow which will install tile to a depth of six feet.

(Continued Page 9)

Williams Farm Drainage - *(Cont'd. from page 8)*

In the 1970's Sherman and Sue purchased a larger float for moving their equipment. They found that with their special wide load permit they could move many of their competitors' equipment as well. Soon the float business became so busy Sherman was on the road from early morning until all hours of the night but Sherman loved the trucking business. He would be off to Toronto at 4AM to pick up a dozer and then move a big backhoe up to Ottawa. One of Sherman's greatest pleasures was working with the Steam Threshers every fall as he floated the giant machines from one farm show to another. Sherman Williams operated his float business until the year 2000 when at the age of seventy-four, he sold his beloved float to his long time friend, Robert Robinson of Ailsa Craig.

In 1975 Sherman and Sue set up a limited company which included all the drainage and trucking equipment with Mark joining his parents in the new company. Mark Williams took over the tile drainage portion of the business while Sherman was kept busy with the trucking. It was a gradual transition and over the years Mark acquired a larger portion of the shares until now he is the majority owner of Sherman Williams Enterprises Limited. Although Mark is licensed as a financial advisor and still works in this capacity during the slack season he was always drawn back to the pioneer home farm. Mark took over the tiling in the 1970's and the farming in the 1980's but was never enthused about the trucking portion of the business which was eventually sold.

Mark Williams married Corie Van Loon in 1979 and they raised a family of four children who now have all gone on to their own careers in life. So today, Mark and his mother Sue, continue operating the Williams Farm Drainage business from the pioneer farm. Sherman Williams was one of the founding members of the Ontario Farm Drainage Association way back in 1958. Sherman served on the executive and was always one of the more forward thinking members. Sherman loved the family farm, the drainage business but most of all floating machinery down the highways. Sherman and Sue were members of the Lambton County Historical Society and he loved his Warwick Township history. However, Sherman suffered a serious stroke in 2000 and passed away in 2009 but his legacy, starting away back in the 1950's lives on at the Williams pioneer farm along the historic Egremont Road.

More Things I Have Learned

I've learned... That sometimes all a person needs is a hand to hold and a heart to understand.

I've learned.... That simple walks with my father around the block on summer nights when I was a child did wonders for me as an adult.

I've learned.... That life is like a roll of toilet paper. The closer it gets to the end, the faster it goes.

I've learned.... That money doesn't buy class.

I've learned.... That it's those small daily happenings that make life so spectacular.

I've learned... That under everyone's hard shell is someone who wants to be appreciated and loved.

I've learned.... That to ignore the facts does not change the facts.

I've learned.... That when you plan to get even with someone, you are only letting that person continue to hurt you.

I've learned.... That love, not time, heals all wounds.

I've learned.... That the easiest way for me to grow as a person is to surround myself with people smarter than I am.

I've learned.... That everyone you meet deserves to be greeted with a smile.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS



January 18 & 19, 2012
LICO Conference
Best Western Lamplighter Inn
591 Wellington Rd.,
London, Ontario N6C 4R3

Primary Drainage Course
January 3—12, 2012
Marden, Ontario

Advanced Drainage Course
February, 2012—Dates to be specified on website
shortly.

OMAFRA Agricultural Erosion Control Structures
Training Courses
February, 2012—Dates to be specified on website
shortly.
Guelph, Ontario area

January 22 & 23, 2013
LICO Conference
Best Western Lamplighter Inn
591 Wellington Rd.,
London, Ontario N6C 4R3

News – Don Lobb

This has been a quiet pre-election summer. Clearly, McGinty does not want any legislative controversy right now. Perhaps with money shortage at the treasury we will for the next while see less infringement on property rights and fewer impediments to business operation. This kind of change would not result in destruction of the environment. Real environmental progress and protection is the product of knowledge and a state of mind – not clubs and laws.

The first drainage “BMP” (Cropland Drainage) is now available. It is full of good information – particularly for lay-people. The target audience is farmers. This document is a real testament to Sid Vander Veen’s ability to bring together a team from all stakeholder groups and keep them working together. To say that this document was a political challenge is an understatement. The interests of Fisheries, Forest, Environment and Agriculture do conflict so reasonable compromise for the greater public good had to be the ultimate objective. At the end of the day, efficient food production does require cropland drainage.

We all owe much to Sid for his persistence and his people-management skills.

Congratulations to Ross Irwin on his 90th Birthday!!!

