

Title of Project: Manure Spreading and Compost Demonstration Project

Report Title: Year 1 Report

Report Covering Period: April 1, 2008 to March 31, 2009

Organization(s): Peace River Forage Association of BC

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Objectives:

- To work with teams, partners and cooperators to identify key demonstration projects
- To demonstrate effective ways to help farmers manage their manure and compost (i.e. BMPs)
- To provide tools and information to farmers to encourage adoption of manure and compost BMPs

Accomplishments:

April to June, 2008:

- Set up rental agreements for manure spreader & compost turner; and set up service, maintenance & movement agreement with Walter Fritsche.
- Established 2 key cooperators for each of 3 parts of project: manure, compost & compost tea.
- Hired Sandra Burton to coordinate project & set up sampling protocol.
- Discussed & developed monitoring methodologies by discussions with researchers in other areas (Wayne Temple, Art Bomke, Shannon Berch, Frank Larney, Arnold Mattson).
- Partnered with Peace Region Forage Seed Association to hire a summer student to assist with sampling & monitoring, especially compost temperature.
- Set up partnerships with 2 soil labs: Soil Food Web (soil biology) & Pacific Soil Analysis (nutrients).
- Sampled soils at demos for pre project background levels, sampled starting point of compost piles.

July to Sept, 2008:

- Monitored compost piles especially compost temperatures, C/N ratios, nutrient levels.
- Compared hotter, quicker compost process with cooler, slower process.
- Compared different starting materials.
- Set up rental of compost tea brewing equipment & spraying equipment.
- Applied compost brew to 2 sites, 2 applications in July & August.
- Monitored demonstration sites post applications.

Oct to Dec, 2008:

- Compiling data.
- Finalized first 4 forage facts about the project & distributed them.
- Prepared an update for November event & for NLC Administration.
- Collected samples from all aspects of the project for use with winter meetings.

Jan to Mar, 2009:

- Compiled compost temperature graphs and photographs for seminar.
- Organized field day for visiting compost researchers.
- Compiled report for PRAD & other partners.

Tasks in progress:

- Preparing 3 more forage facts.
- Preparing a compost project page for website.
- Hiring student for next season.
- Revising methodology & setting up new demos.

Extension and demonstration:

- Hosted forage & livestock producers for a major summer tour, starting with whole morning at the compost staging site at Bickford Farms, with cross sections exposed in 6 manure & compost piles.
- Partnered with Grasslands Conservation Council so combined tours of 100 met for afternoon & supper.
- Hosted 6 smaller field days and demonstrations at 3 of the demo sites.
- Prepared 5 presentations about this project both for forage events & for other groups in area.
- Provided some slides for Peggy Strankman with Canadian Cattlemen's Association for use at a major compost conference in Red Deer.
- Posted forage facts on website at: http://www.peaceforage.bc.ca/forage_facts.html

Variations from original work plan, schedule or budget:

- We were unable to set up the truly effective dialog with Soil Food Web that we had hoped for, so there was less sampling in this portion of the approved budget.
- Instead of monitoring soil biology intensively at composting sites, we used a more labour intensive method of monitoring their activities indirectly by regular temperature monitoring. More time to get demos set up and running smoothly, and more time was spent sharing our early methodologies and results with people. For these reasons, the labour portion is somewhat over budget.
- The Forage Directors decided that equipment servicing and maintenance should be part of the equipment rental agreement, so this category is under budget.
- Travel time was less than anticipated due to a generous and unlisted Contribution in Kind.
- Industry contributions are under budget in first year, but that is not surprising. For the first year, the focus was getting the demonstrations set up and running smoothly. Later years of the project are the more appropriate time to promote more wide spread use of the equipment by members.

Comments:

- This most exciting accomplishment of this project is that we learned how to transform raw beef cattle manure into a topsoil-like product in 8 weeks. A longer processing and stabilization period improves the product even more. We made soil !!
- Our project is well regarded by researchers and organizations both within and from outside our region.
- We learned a tremendous amount about soil microbial populations & variations in composting materials.
- We made progress in designing workable and practical methodologies for producing/ handling compost & monitoring process/ quality.

Attachments:

Financial information is attached.

Articles about the tour/ field day on June 7 with acknowledgements.