

Title of Special Initiative: Interactive Soils Field Days
Report Title: Final Report
Report Covering Period: September 1, 2013 to November 15, 2013

Organization(s): Peace River Forage Association
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Objectives:

1. Develop case studies where students can learn the basics of soils id and forages id (both tame and native) & use these tools to give recommendations for successful revegetation and rejuvenation.
2. Host the first 2 pilot case studies/ field days this fall. These will be the first in a series of 5 case study/ field day/ workshop events in the total directed studies field based course, as offered in the UNBC calendar.
3. To instigate more dialog and information sharing among students, forage managers, revegetation consultants, university researchers/ professors, soils specialists and range ecologists.

Accomplishments: Two successful field days were held on September 14 and September 28. Both days were well attended by 35 to 45 people. There was a healthy mix of forage producers, environmental consultants, researchers and resource people participating in the discussions of the day(s).

There was considerable effort expended to collect detail for the 2 case studies ahead of time including landscape factors, soil profiles/ analysis, plant id/ vigor/ rooting characteristics. There was considerable liaison and brain storming with "group mentors" and "station masters" to develop ways to communicate their key messages with hands on activities. Discussion of management issues and decision making context was carefully facilitated at the beginning and the end of the field days.

The Peace River Forage Association has partnered with UNBC, in particular Bill McGill, to have these courses accepted and advertised in the UNBC course calendar for credit for UNBC students. There has also been liaison with the appropriate personnel so that these days are recognized for Agrolgists Professional Development and Certified Crop Advisor credits.

Tasks in progress: not applicable for a short term initiative.

Extension and Communication: There are 2 articles, written in the **Forage First** newsletter which was mailed to members in early October and February (on file if required). The first article was also published in the **Beef in BC** magazine. PRAD was acknowledged in the articles.

Finances:

Income and expense report attached.

Variances from original work plan, schedule or budget: Less funds were spent on purchasing resource materials while more contractor time (Sandra Burton & Talon Johnson) was spent to create relevant resources, background detail and hands on activities for our region.

Summary comments, conclusions: It takes more time, effort and coordination with resource people, station masters and group mentors to convert key messages from lecture format to a more interactive, hands-on format. But all participants were very complimentary on what is learned during this style of field day, and how much more effective the integrated take home messages are. Our most rewarding feedback is people keep asking when the next session of this course is and in a region where pre-registration is not common, we have people committing ahead of time.

LOCAL NEWS

Digging into Soils and Forages

Submitted by Sandra Burton

This spring the Peace River Forage Association was approached with an exciting opportunity to partner with the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC) to develop a soils and plant course. The target audiences are crop advisors, ranchers, revegetation consultants, university professors, students, soils specialists and range agrologists. We are working with Bill McGill, a UNBC Dean & Professor, to deliver this course in the Peace River area. The concept of the course is to work with real people solving real issues using a case study approach. All activities are interactive, field based and as hands on as possible. We strongly believe that learning is all about having fun.

The course will be recognized in three ways:

- UNBC course credits for students towards graduation
- An approved Professional Development activity with BC and Alberta Agrologists (BCIA & AIA)
- Certified Crop Advisor credits

September 14th was the first day of a five day series offered in the Peace Region. It attracted a wonderful mix of forage producers, environmental and oil & gas professionals. This first day was hosted by the Hogberg Family and the question of the day was "Where has all my alfalfa gone?"

To understand the multi-faceted issue, participants were divided into four small groups that rotated through a series of stations. Activities offered clues from different view points: soils (bottom up), plants (top down) and landscape (side to side).

After everyone had a chance to learn what they could from each station, we gathered at basecamp and engaged in a large group discussion. The goal here is to integrate the biological knowledge acquired throughout the day with the management context of the Hogberg operations. The focus of all the field days is not so much answering the question of the day as the discussion and the discovery of mentors in our midst.

We had about 30 people out to our first session and we received very positive feedback. Jim Mackenzie: "We have been to other professional development sessions but the interactive format and take home knowledge from this field day is head and shoulders above anything else." and John Kendrew: "When you are bent down over a soil pit and there is so much information flying around, some of it goes over your head!"



A Big Thank You Goes To:

Our hosts for Session 1:

- Hogberg Family

Our partners:

- UNBC
- Shell Canada
- Peace River Agriculture Development Fund
- Investment Agriculture Foundation/AAFC

Our enthused station masters:

- Keith Carroll
- Richard Kabzems
- Julie Robinson
- Sandra Burton

Our knowledgeable mentors:

Bill McGill, Glenn Hogberg, John Kendrew, Bill Wilson, Talon Johnson.