

R.M. of Enniskillen Grazing Project

CONTACT

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Year awarded: 2024

Project timeline: March 2023 – ongoing

Project video: <https://youtu.be/yK7lsDunjuw>

THE PRACTICE

What was the issue?

The rural municipality of Enniskillen purchased a section of land along the Souris River to be primarily used for gravel extraction. Gravel extraction only occurs on about 20 acres of the 540 acres. With no fence on the perimeter of the 540 acres the pasture was not grazed.

What was the project?

The RM decided to create a grazing plan that all future landowners will be made to follow. This project is one of the first to be done, and the RM is hopeful that other municipalities and non-profit organizations will follow suit. The RM hopes to see a high stock density, a short grazing period, and a full recovery period with all future land renters. The right renter will believe in regenerative agriculture, and they will be monitored for this project to be successful. In the future, the RM hopes to host pasture tours, including tours for the nearby school kids to learn about carbon sequestration, the possibility of regenerative agriculture, animal impact, stock density, and soil armour.

The project is ongoing, as the fence is being constructed currently; however, it will be able to allow a renter to do all the actions listed above.

THE PROCESS

From the beginning, the municipal council was on board and supportive, knowing it was one of the first to be done in a municipality. The division 4 councillor was heavily involved, as the land is in his division. The CAO worked with the Canadian Forage & Grassland Association (CFGGA) to take the grazing course, build a grazing plan, apply for grants, write letters to researchers and partners, line up contractors, and oversee the project.

The CFGGA was involved in the beginning as well. They believe in this project and hope that more municipalities and non-profits will follow suit. They are covering the costs of several key pieces of this project, including all the fencing, a razor, dedication of the area this as the Enniskillen Demo Site for

future demonstrations, and half of the water well, with the Farm and Ranch Water Infrastructure Program (FRWIP) paying for the other half. The RM was able to put a community water well in at the same time to benefit other ratepayers. They have been working with the Ministry of Agriculture for potential research projects and have sent a letter out to potential partners and other researchers, hoping that the land will benefit livestock producers for years to come.

The project required several resources, including the On-Farm Climate Action Fund (OFCAF), Canadian Forage & Grassland Association Grazing Class & Plan Development, contractors, surveyor's and a hydrogeologist.

THE RESULTS

This project will have a long-lasting effect on the research opportunities that are available for livestock, and soil and plant health. The RM is optimistic that once ratepayers and other livestock owners see the improvement of the land from grazing practices, there will be many more to follow. Increased participation benefits soil, plants, livestock, and cost efficiency when it is extended on high-quality forage.

This project is ongoing, but will be evaluated through research papers, and soil testing before and after. Once the website has been launched through CFGA more information will be able at <https://www.canadianfga.ca/en/projects/advanced-grazing-systems/demonstration-sites>.

Challenges faced:

Water well drillers and fencers struggle to drill the well because the land is very rocky. OFCAF was out of funding, so the project was one year behind what was initially planned. Due to the RM not having any farming or livestock income, it didn't qualify for the FRWIP program to drill a well for livestock purposes. The RM had to drill a community well to access this funding.

LESSONS LEARNED

It is beneficial to work with as many partners and researchers as possible and be prepared to dedicate many hours to the project. With a project that is one of the first of its kind there are many learning hours. Ratepayers are curious and interested in where the funds come from, be prepared to answer many questions.