

## **Farm Management**

Thursday, November 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2012  
Richmond Room, (9:00am – 5:30pm)

## **Workshop: Holistic Farm Management**

### **Speakers: TONY AND FRAN McQUAIL, owners of Meeting Place Organic Farm**

**Tony and Fran** are the owners of Meeting Place Organic Farm which has been organic for over 35 years. They took their first Holistic Management course in 1995 and have been using HM to guide their farm and family since then. They are Holistic Management Certified Educators so that they can share the benefits of HM with other farm families. The McQuails are founding members of the Ecological Farmers Association of Ontario and have been active in many farm and community organizations.

### **Executive Summary**

Holistic Management is an approach to managing resources that builds biodiversity, improves production and generates financial strength; it improves quality of life while enhancing the environment that sustains us all. This workshop will provide an overview of the key elements and how you can apply them to your farm.

### **Detailed Notes**

Holistic management is about creating the life you want. It considers the lifestyle, the environment, and the money. It's about a balance of people, land, and profit.

How are you going to make it happen, what you wanted to do? *Tongue and cheek - how many want to work longer, harder hours, for less money?*

After taking their first course in 1995, they did a planning chart to really look at their life. From this chart they realized there were a lot of reasons they were stressed.

After doing the holistic training, they decided to try and do what their girls had asked for; to take a summer vacation. They decided to try and go to British Columbia for the month of August. So they decided to plan what it would take to go to BC for August.

- They decided that they would buy grain instead of grow.
- With the open block of time in April/May, they would try and rebuild a greenhouse.
- And so in 1996, they took a month off and went to BC.
- Make the best plan you can, and then figure out everything that can go wrong with that.

**Q: How did that work economically?**

**A: By making the plans, they were able to do it without going bankrupt.**

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In 1995 after taking the management course, they took a monthly wage. And since 1995 the farm has become profitable every year.

Previous to this system, if there was money left over, they would 'buy' something.

Take the snow blower as an example: It broke, before they would have just replaced it. However the holistic management course prompted them to think about other things

- They could replace the snow blower
- Park at the end of the lane
- Use horse with scoops
- Hire a neighbour

They ended up borrowing a snow scoop from an Amish neighbour, and it worked very well. There were several benefits, including renewable energy, and exercise/ work for the horses during the winter.

However the real lesson is the benefit of slowing down spontaneous decisions. It takes you back to re-evaluate your **holistic goal**.

Financial Planning developed new enterprises, such as freezer meat retailing and the CSA garden pick up.

Alan Savory and HMI

- Brittle/Non Brittle is Arid and non-Arid.
- Mimicking wild herding with predators - the animals will release and help fertilize an area and then vacate almost immediately.
- When you're working with biology, assume you're going to be wrong and monitor where you can.

They stated "*It is impossible for us to break the law, we can only break ourselves against the law*".

When you start working *with* nature - does it work perfectly all of the time? No. But does it work pretty well, a lot of the time? Yes.

Instead of doing something and hoping it works out, we are going to plan the results we want in advance, then monitor, control and re-plan to achieve our results.

**Q: Why did it take you so long to do this; did you just bump into the concept?**

**A: I was first exposed to it in the 80s, and there wasn't really anyone doing it. Skepticism about the trainers (i.e. folks who weren't farmers doing the training). It was really once it was available to take locally in training.**

**Q: Have you found yourself in a situation using these techniques where you can't get to where you want to, because one of the factors are out of sync.**

**A: We haven't, but we are aware of where it can happen, especially with extreme external factors (like BSE). It can also happen when the dynamic changes on paper but not in practice (i.e. "Dad" is still overbearing). "Log jams". is what those circumstances are known as.**

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**Q: How much time do you put aside to put together your plan and nurture your plan.**

**A: It takes time, but it was the best investment ever. A lot of time with the enterprise analysis. It helps to have two people involved because we can get mixed up.**

Fran and Tony have learned you must pay yourself first - plan for a profit. This was a huge paradigm shift. Planning is a discipline, but it pays off incredibly.

Sunday February 17, 2013 - at Watershed Farm - Holistic Farm Management Workshop. The dream is to get the course run out here. The goal is to give them a teaser, and try and have more sign up for a 6 day workshop in the future.

**Q: External Factors - you're setting up a holistic system on your own but whole world is very 'unholistic'.**

**A: It is a weak link. But if individuals start doing this, that's how you make more of a movement (think organic).**