

Digging into Soils & Forages

by Sandra Burton

This spring our 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 our 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.

For those that need it, 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?".



Deryle Griffith quizzing forage id station master Keith Carroll.

Thank you to our partners:

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



Bill & Alice McGill, Collin Batchelor, Glenn Hogberg, Katie Hill, Marilyn Carroll & Sandra Burton discuss what the soil tells us.

There were a number of pieces to the puzzle to understand the issue so 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. Soils folks joined goat school folks for a "dirty goat banquet" and enjoyed the wonderful meal prepared by Jen Johnson.

We received very positive feedback after our first field day. **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!"

If you are keen to join this dynamic learning dialog, see the next page for details on the next sessions.

Thank you to our enthused station masters:

Keith Carroll, Richard Kabzems,
Julie Robinson, Sandra Burton

Thank you to our knowledgeable mentors:

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