

Digging into Soils & Forages

by Bill McGill, Alice McGill & Sandra Burton



Jim Chramosta, Jenn Critcher & Kristin Kendrew (right side) share their perspectives from the oil & gas activities.

September 28th was the 2nd day of a five day series of a **Interactive Soils & Forages Course** offered in the Peace Region. Our association is working with UNBC to deliver a course that is a unique opportunity for forage producers, environmental consultants and gas producers to work together on common problems. In combination with a “people or problem first and last” approach, mingling such diverse groups and interests together brings to light overarching opportunities, constraints and insights. It builds common understanding; it is fertile soil in which trust may grow.

All activities are interactive, field based and as hands on as possible. This session was hosted by Encana and the question of the day was “How can we re-vegetate this lease site berm?” Again we attracted a great mix of forage producers, environmental and oil & gas professionals.



Tail gate soil texturing with Kayle Watson, Shellie English, Jim Chramosta, Bill McGill, John Kendrew and Tannis Brown.

The enthused participants were divided into 4 small groups that rotated through a series of stations. Activities offered clues to understanding the question, such as landscapes, soils, plants, roots and seeding challenges. After everyone had a chance to learn from each station we gathered for group discussion. The goal here was to integrate the biological knowledge acquired throughout the day with the management context of the oil and gas operations.

Alice McGill grows hay near Prince George, and she attended both fall events. She found the field sessions informative and stimulating. According to Alice: “The thing that impressed me was so many different groups of people all working together: farmers, academics, consultants, gas and oil people; everybody was trying to work positively together.”

In Bill McGill’s words “It has been said that although one learns much at prestigious world-class universities, a major benefit of attending is the people you meet there. The soils-forage-revegetation course is also an opportunity to share knowledge and gain insights from the people you meet there. What one learns from colleagues has potential to make a big difference at home or in one’s workplace. The opportunity to share what one knows or to recount one’s lived experience is most gratifying. In academic circles this is often referred to as a ‘Community of Practice’. Although Communities of Practice seem new to many of us, they are as old as storytelling. Communities of practice have long aided learning among hunters and gatherers, farmers, guilds, professions, workers on shop floors, and the list goes on. The trick is to develop the community. I see community developing as part of this course.”

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