



Hamilton-Halton
Watershed Stewardship Program

A Program of:



Landowners Sharing their Stories

Written in 2011, this story is one in a series of stories told by local landowners who have a passion for protecting the natural features on the land they steward and for protecting the water that flows through that land. Many of these landowners are recipients of the Watershed Stewardship Award. The award is a sign that landowners proudly display on their property acknowledging their commitment to be good stewards of land and water.

LIZTON ACRES FARM - John and Mary Brunsveld by Jaime Overy

Lizton Acres Farm sits high atop the Spencer Creek Watershed. It is in the very northern reaches of the watershed, where the water begins its journey to Hamilton Harbour. This 100 acre farm has been in the Brunsveld Family since 1967. John and Mary bought the farm from John's father in 1988 and their second eldest son Dirk, a recent graduate of Ridgetown College, is planning to carry on the family's dairy farming tradition after completing his degree from the Ontario Agricultural College at the University of Guelph.

In the seventeen years that the Stewardship Program has been working with the Brunsveld Family, we have helped them undertake eight different Beneficial Management Practices (BMP)

projects on the farm, in addition to numerous other BMP projects that they have already undertaken themselves. Our partnership began in 1994 when John and Mary, as good stewards of the natural environment, recognized the need to improve their manure storage and milk house wash water facilities and in turn, participated in the Clean-up Rural Beaches Program. From

there, their involvement in farm stewardship continued to grow and they have been making improvements to their farm and operation ever since. The next year, they fenced livestock away from the creek and allowed us to bring 4-H volunteers out to plant trees and shrubs to fill in the riparian area along the creek. Within a few years a lush riparian buffer had established along the entire creek.



Years later we worked with John and Mary again to relocate their livestock wintering yard away from the creek and into a new state-of-the-art multi-purpose barn. In converting their traditional operation to an organic operation – John had become a student of innovation. The new barn design included a space for both a new manure storage facility and the livestock. Using an innovative new practice that John had learned about on a farm tour in Minnesota, the livestock open area of the new barn was designed as an unconventional bedded pack under a compost management system. The compost system requires daily tilling and aeration of the pack. Bedding is added regularly to keep the animals clean and slowly increases the depth of the pack as the composting process releases carbon from the pack. The reported advantages of this innovative practice are improved herd health and

lower milk contaminant levels from milking cows. Warmth from the compost process also keeps the animals warm in the winter and the soft bedding provides comfort for the animals.

Most recently, we have worked with John and Mary to fence their livestock away from the wetlands on their property and to improve the crossing through this area which opened up access to additional pasture land, necessary space to continue their conversion to an organic operation. Over the years, all of these projects have protected thirteen acres of wetland and over a kilometer of Upper Spencer Creek.

Always willing to sharing his knowledge and experiences, John is a champion of the Environmental Farm Plan program and the Stewardship Program, sharing with his friends and peers, the benefits and opportunities available through these programs. The Brunsveld Family has been a pleasure to work with for these many years - always with an open door and warm welcome - and we look forward to working with them for many years to come.



Jaime Overy

Interested in learning more about natural features on your property? Call to arrange a free on-site consultation!

Hamilton-Halton Watershed Stewardship Program
c/o Hamilton Conservation Authority and Conservation Halton
www.hamiltonhaltonstewardship.ca
Hamilton Conservation Authority: 905-525-2181, Extension 181
Conservation Halton: 905-336-1158, Extension 2263

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