



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Officials learn about irrigation challenges in a stressed watershed

UTOPIA, Ontario, July 29, 2010 - The weather could not have been better for illustrating the importance of water irrigation and the challenges that agricultural producers face in the Innisfil Creek area.

On July 8th, with a temperature of 33 degrees Celsius, the Innisfil Creek Water Users Association (ICWUA) hosted an irrigation tour to show how the various crops in the watershed respond to heat and moisture stresses during extreme summer weather conditions. The tour, organized in part by the Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority (NVCA), was for staff from the ministries of the environment, natural resources and agriculture, food and rural affairs.

The ICWUA represents the voice of the irrigation-dependent community and promotes best management practices to local water users. The group was formed following the summer of 2007, when the average water flow in Innisfil Creek, estimated to be 5,000 gallons-per-minute during dry summer months, dropped to 356 gallons-per-minute, leaving many without adequate water supplies.

The local producers were able to showcase the best management practices being used to improve their operations given current water limitations.

“It is in everyone’s best interest to take care of our water resources so that we as growers can continue to use water to irrigate our valued crops, provide locally grown agricultural products, and to sustain the livelihoods of many in the area,” says Frank Solty, owner of Solty’s Garden Centre and ICWUA member.

At the garden centre, Solty showed the group his farm’s highly efficient, low volume, drip irrigation system. This system is specialized for nursery crops and Solty’s system is the only one like it in the Innisfil Creek area.

With drip irrigation, a hose with strategically located holes is run along the ground and slowly releases water to the roots of the plants. This eliminates wasting water from irrigating in between trees.

Solty installed the system a few years ago and has seen the benefits of it from increased crop yields and water management planning. He is able to maintain uniform moisture conditions in his trees and shrubs. If the nursery stock



Frank Solty of Solty’s Garden Centre shows how his drip irrigation system works on the Innisfil Creek irrigation tour.

Member Municipalities

Adjala-Tosorontio

Amaranth

Barrie

The Blue Mountains

Bradford-West Gwillimbury

Clearview

Collingwood

Essa

Grey Highlands

Innisfil

Melancthon

Mono

Mulmur

New Tecumseth

Oro-Medonte

Shelburne

Springwater

Wasaga Beach

Watershed Counties

Dufferin

Grey

Simcoe

Member of



Celebrating 50 Years in Conservation 1960-2010



was to miss one irrigation the plants would not be ready for sale until the leaves recovered in the next season.

“Working towards achieving a balance between taking water for the purpose of irrigating, sustaining a viable creek ecosystem for the greater good for the community, while keeping urban and industrial development in check, will go a long way to providing economic, environmental and social benefits for this area,” says Soltz.

Other irrigation equipment was demonstrated including a linear pivot and Hobbs Reel Rain Traveler at Brayford Sod, a centre pivot at Zander Sod, and a Valley irrigation pivot based on a deep aquifer at H.J. Vander Zaag Farms. Best management practices were discussed, including adopting a water management plan, using flow meters, and developing groundwater sources from an aquifer that is not used in the household.

The group also saw new streamflow gauges that have been installed on the Innisfil and Beeton creeks by the NVCA. Agricultural producers can now access real-time streamflow data 24 hours a day. Access to this information can help with scheduling water takings to even out demand and reduce impacts to the environment.

The irrigation tour was an opportunity to bring together all parties involved in the permit-to-take-water process. Any person or business wanting to take more than 50,000 litres of water per day must have a permit from the Ontario Ministry of the Environment.

The Innisfil Creek area has long been noted for its vast agricultural fields and exceptional crop production of potato, sod, carrots and onions, which as of 2006 was valued conservatively at approximately \$10 million, according to agricultural data from the 2006 census.

The irrigation tour was funded by the Ministry of Natural Resources and organized by staff from the NVCA, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada.

Working in partnership with the agricultural community, the NVCA is providing local program coordination and technical support to the Innisfil Creek Water Users Association.

- 30 -

About the NVCA

The Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority is a public agency dedicated to the preservation of a healthy environment through specialized programs to protect, conserve and enhance our water, wetlands, forests and lands.

For more information please contact:

Ryan Post

NVCA Hydrogeologist/ Source Water Protection Coordinator

Phone: (705) 424-1479 ext. 249

Email: rpost@nvca.on.ca

Member Municipalities

Adjala-Tosorontio

Amaranth

Barrie

The Blue Mountains

Bradford-West Gwillimbury

Clearview

Collingwood

Essa

Grey Highlands

Innisfil

Melancthon

Mono

Mulmur

New Tecumseth

Oro-Medonte

Shelburne

Springwater

Wasaga Beach

Watershed Counties

Dufferin

Grey

Simcoe

Member of



Conservation ONTARIO
Natural Champions

Celebrating 50 Years in Conservation 1960-2010