

The Farley Creek Project

HEALTHY CATTLE, HEALTHY STREAM



The farm



Bill Kabbes and his family operate an 80 head dairy operation in Wellington County near Arthur, Ontario.

The family farm includes 250 acres of pasture and cultivated land used to grow corn, mixed grains and hay.

Herd health

A tributary of Farley Creek runs through the Kabbes' property. Traditionally, cattle were pastured in the floodplain and drank from the stream. The cattle trampled stream banks and streambeds causing erosion, soil loss and excess sedimentation. Cattle waste introduced nutrients and bacteria into the stream degrading water quality downstream. Poor water quality also affected stream-dwelling creatures like fish. In addition, poorly drained or muddy areas and unsanitary water are linked to dairy cattle health problems, such as foot rot and mastitis, both problems experienced on the Kabbes' farm.

The solution

Bill Kabbes has made a number of changes over the past 20 years to reduce the environmental impact of his operation. One of the first changes was to install fencing to keep the cattle out of the creek. Initially, Bill had reservations about the project.

“I was worried that the fenced area would become overrun with weeds, attract nuisance wildlife and appear messy and unkempt. Aside from being an eyesore, I was worried the fence would be expensive to maintain and I would have trouble keeping the cattle out of the area.”



Tree swallow

Photo by Charles Warren/NBII

Before



After



In addition to fencing, improved stream crossings were constructed, trees were planted and the natural vegetation was allowed to grow back. This was done to stabilize the slopes, reduce erosion, and limit the amount of sediment entering the stream. The buffered area is 820 metres long and averages 15 metres per side of the stream. In total only 1.5 hectares were set aside for the project.

