

Peel farmers encouraged to attend upcoming farm tour

Funding available for farmers who implement agricultural best management practices

By ZACHARY ROMAN

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

An upcoming farm tour will highlight support available to farmers who implement agricultural best management practices.

From 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. on September 13, Credit Valley Conservation (CVC), Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA), and the Region of Peel will host the Peel Farm Tour.

The tour starts at Albion Hills Conservation Area (16500 Regional Road 50) and will first stop at Mount Wolfe Farm. Next, the tour will stop at Applegarth Farm before finishing at the Albion Hills Community Farm.

Bus transportation and lunch will be provided to all who attend this free event. Those interested in registering for the tour can visit eventbrite.ca and enter "Peel Farm Tour" into the site's search bar.

Holly Shipclark, Senior Coordinator of Agricultural Extension for CVC, said the farm tour is a really important event and she's hoping to see many Peel farmers come out to learn about the programs and resources available to them.

One such resource is the Peel Rural Water Quality Program (PRWQP), which provides technical assistance and funding for agricultural landowners in Peel to voluntarily implement agricultural beneficial management practices on their land.

Since 2004, environmental farm projects valued at over \$4.7 million have been implemented through this program.

Another resource is Alternative Land Use Services (ALUS) Peel, which is an extension of the PRWQP. ALUS helps Peel farmers overcome environmental challenges affecting farm productivity and soil and water quality using nature-based solutions.

"The program supports natural infrastructure projects like tree planting, wetland, stream, and grassland restoration, in-field soil erosion control and livestock fencing," says ALUS. "ALUS Peel provides participating farmers annual payments for ongoing project maintenance and monitoring efforts."

Shipclark said at Mount Wolfe Farm, farm tour participants will be looking at "a really fantastic wetland restoration project."

At Applegarth Farm, participants will be able to take a look at a stream daylighting project that was completed in 2017 and has been monitored, maintained and enhanced since then.

Karen Hutchinson of the Albion Hills Community Farm (AHCF) said there's a variety of things done there to practice water conservation.

In the farm's allotment gardens, rain barrels are encouraged and many are in use. In the farm's market garden, drip irrigation is used.

Hutchinson said the farm tour shows farmers opportunities to get funding for projects that not only benefit them but the environment as a whole.

"There's climate change benefits, watershed benefits, so many different benefits," said Hutchinson. "It's amazing? we all benefit at the end of the day."