

THE SASKATCHEWAN ADVISORY COUNCIL ON SOILS AND LAND USE

Report to the 1978 Soils and Crops Workshop

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During the year under report three meetings of council were held; the standing committees met as required. The Land Use Committee, chaired by Les Henry, was formally disbanded; this committee, which had been established in late 1975 on the recommendation of an ad hoc committee of SASCC, had been envisaged as a core technical group with advisory responsibilities related to urban fringe development, water drainage policies, wildlife concerns, pollution from intensive livestock operations and other land use problem areas for the minister may require professional advice. The committee had functioned primarily on paper and as there was little evidence that it would in the near future serve a useful function council approved the recommendation of the committee chairman that it be disbanded.

The only other administrative change made during the past year was the appointment of Chris Holm as secretary. There were no other changes in council membership.

The following are intended to summarize the highlights of the activities of council and its standing committees during the past year.

1. J.L. Henry was named as the council's representative on the Canada Committee on Soil Fertility. Henry will be reporting on that meeting to the council when they meet this coming Friday afternoon.

2. Council continued to be represented on the Western Canada Soil Coordinating Committee by Wally Hamm (Wally is presently chairman of that committee), Les Henry, Harry Ukrainetz and John Stewart. This committee also met in early December in Winnipeg with the prime objective of attempting to reach a consensus on broadcast fertilizer phosphorus recommendations for the prairie region. This topic was again discussed at a meeting of the Coordinating Committee held in Saskatoon on February 7 and fortuitously general agreement was reached. The guidelines on broadcast phosphate applications approved by the Western Canada Soil Coordinating Committee

will be considered during the coming Friday meeting of Council.

3. The chairman of the Fertilizer, and Agronomy Committees undertook the onerous task of revising the soil and fertilizer, and cropping practices sections of the guide. Both sections were completed and submitted to the guide committee on schedule. A special vote of thanks is extended Wally Hamm and Herman Austenson for a job well done.

4. The attempts by council to formalize communications with the Plant Products Division, or more specifically the Fertilizer Unit, Plant Products Division, Ottawa, have been successful. Tom Phenix who has transmitted council's concerns with respect to exotic chemicals in particular to Charlie Crober has assured us that in the future we will be informed of all requests for licensing or approving such products, and in turn council will advise this federal authority of any products being distributed which we feel are ineffective etc.

5. The 1978 Fertilizer and Cropping Practices bulletin is presently at the printers and should be available for distribution within a week.

6. The 1977 summer tour was well attended and the some 60 participants had an opportunity to view a number of fertility experiments within the Outlook irrigation area, and at the same time were introduced to a number of problems which have been encountered in the area, such as canal seepage, drainage, and salinity etc.

7. Council brought a number of items of concern to the December meeting of SASCC. These are briefly summarized below together with specific actions that SASCC has taken.

(a) Council reconfirmed its request that it be renamed the Saskatchewan Advisory Council on Soils and Agronomy.

SASCC not only approved this recommendation but added the former Weeds Council as a standing committee.

(b) An earlier request by council related to metric conversion and while council members recognized the reasons for SASCC's indecision recommended that July 1, 1979 be formally established as a target date for full metric conversion for all agronomic guidelines, that full and effective publicity be given to this target date and that such units as kilograms per acre or other similarly mixed units such as liters per acre not be used.

SASCC in responding indicated they were sympathetic with the council's recommendation but also noted the strong feelings against full conversion.

(c) In response to an earlier request from SASCC for priority research, council responded by listing zero tillage, fertilizer herbicide mixtures, and chemical fallow as high priority topics.

SASCC responded to the suggestions by encouraging the council members to support research in these areas in any way possible.

(d) Council brought to SASCC attention the increasing numbers of out of province laboratories which had been actively soliciting soil testing business but whose recommendations were not supported by in-province research. Council asked for SASCC's approval of a policy which required these laboratories to adopt acceptable analytical methods, and the soil testing benchmarks presently used by the University laboratory.

SASCC responded that they would like to be kept informed on this matter.

8. A particular area of concern of the council relates to that of the disparity in guidelines for soil sampling depths which exists between Saskatchewan and Alberta. The increasing activities of private laboratories is bringing this discrepancy to the attention of an increasing number of farmers. The Fertilizer Committee will be considering measures to counteract this trend including special workshops with various representatives of the fertilizer trade.

9. The 1978 summer tour, the dates for which will be announced later, will include the Scott Experimental Farm and items of interest in northwestern Saskatchewan.

10. This is the last workshop which I will attend in the capacity as chairman of the council, and I want to take this opportunity of thanking all those who have cooperated so well with me during the some 12 years that I served in this capacity.