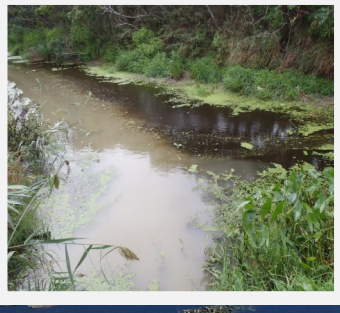
Agricultural Improvement Fund

Lower Thames Conservation

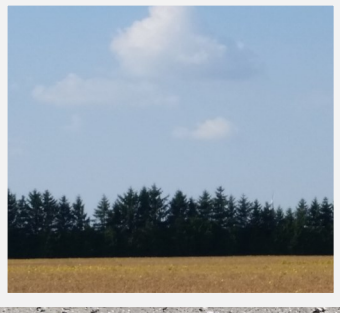
Working with local farmers to improve our soil, water and air.

Soil

Water



Air



Introduction to the Agricultural Improvement Fund (AIF)

The Lower Thames Valley Conservation Authority has developed a funding initiative that works to help farmers proactively protect soil, air and water. We will continually rely on our soil, air and water for a future of bountiful harvests.

The **Agricultural Improvement Fund** has been designed to help farmers improve and adapt to an ever changing ag-industry and vastly changing environment. With climate change producing less frequent but more intensive weather masses it will be essential to adapt and minimize the effect climate change has on altering the landscape we rely on. This program hopes to meet the following outcomes:

- Respond quickly and effectively to environmental risks to your farm management
- Improve your ability to adapt to climate change

These projects will focus on improving the agricultural sector capacity and responsiveness to reduce environmental risks that can impact farm business and the overall perception of the agricultural industry.

What are Best Management Practices (BMPs)?

Fresh, clean drinking water is amongst the highest priority in the Great Lakes Water basin. Lake Erie and some of its inhabitants have felt the effects of what happens when drinking water quality becomes compromised due to harmful algae blooms (HAB). Best management practices have been developed to provide farmers with:

"A practical, affordable approach to conserving a farm's soil and water resources without sacrificing productivity"

What percentage of cost-share can I qualify for?

If you are planning on implementing a BMP project on your farm and meet the eligible criteria listed on Page 4 you could qualify for a 50% cost-share!

Applying for AIF:

What makes me eligible?

In order to qualify for the AIF you must:

1. Live or farm within the Lower Thames Valley Watershed
2. Offer a form of "in-kind" contribution. Whether it be labour, equipment, supplies (gravel, fill) etc.

Additionally it is recommended you:

1. Participate in at least one Lower Thames Valley workshop in the year you applied for funding
2. You complete an Environmental Farm Plan (Third or Fourth Edition)

How and where do I submit my application?

You can find the AIF application form on the LTVCA website and at the back of this brochure.

Download at:

www.ltvca.ca/agriculture

Applying for AIF is a simple process. Download the application and fill out all pertinent items.

Applications can be submitted by:

Email

Colin.Little@ltvca.ca

Fax

519-352-3435

For more information, contact:

Colin Little

519-354-7310 Ext. 231

What 'Best Management Practices' qualify for the Agricultural Improvement Fund?

Buffer Strips

- Buffer strips act as living filters, trapping and treating sediments and other materials from upland farm activities
- They not only help stabilize stream banks but help to prevent erosion
- Through the planting of permanent native or non invasive species of grasses, legumes, trees and shrubs a natural riparian can be created
- OMAFRA recommends a buffer strip with a width of at least 16 ft. or 5 meters

What 'Best Management Practices' qualify for the Agricultural Improvement Fund?

Windbreaks

- Contrary to common belief windbreaks offer an effective method of preventing aeolian soil erosion (wind blown) on the farm
- Windbreaks offer a form of protection to keep your valuable top plow layer on the field
- Tall standing windbreaks also have the potential to create a microclimate which results in increased crop yields

The LTVCA offers discounts for windbreaks:

At least 750 trees will net a **40% price reduction**

At least 1500 trees will net a **75% price reduction**!

What 'Best Management Practices' qualify for the Agricultural Improvement Fund?

Cover Crops

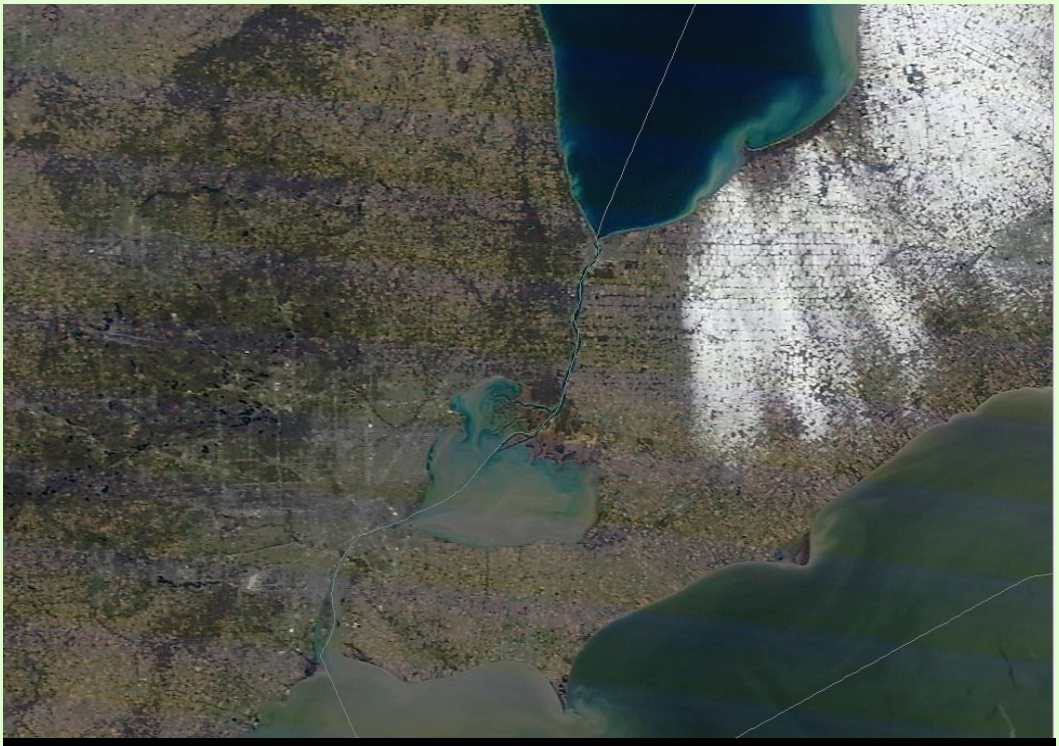
- Cover crops are an effective way to protect soil from erosion and enhance soil organic matter (SOM)

- There are a wide variety of cover crops that provide cover over winter months to hold your soil in place
- Soil in winter months has the potential to erode both by wind and water action

What 'Best Management Practices' qualify for the Agricultural Improvement Fund?

Erosion Control

- Soil erosion next to a watercourse has the potential to erode away your valuable farm land and could cause sediment loading increasing the likelihood of drain cleanouts
- Structural erosional control through bioengineering and re-vegetation of banks can mitigate bank-cut erosion
- More costly and intensive structural erosion control methods such as riprap and crib walls also are valuable in mitigating watercourse erosion



Satellite imagery showing entrained soil particles in the Lakes as a result of Fall tillage (November, 2013)

What 'Best Management Practices' qualify for the Agricultural Improvement Fund?

Fencing to protect shorelines/stream banks

- Livestock grazing is an effective way for livestock to feed on natural grasses
- However, livestock can have a negative effect on not only the erosion of riparian zones, but on water quality
- Livestock wading in a watercourse as seen in the case of Walkerton can severely pollute water
- Funding exists to install fencing to protect shorelines, stream banks and wetlands to prevent livestock from entering a watercourse

What 'Best Management Practices' qualify for the Agricultural Improvement Fund?

Improved Stream Crossings

- Many farms have watercourses that run through the property
- This can make travel between parcels difficult
- Enhanced stream crossings not only makes it easier for farmers to cross streams, but help to reduce the destruction to a watercourse

What 'Best Management Practices' qualify for the Agricultural Improvement Fund?

Grassland Waterways

- Many farms have natural meandering swales which can be seen during the spring melt and high precipitation events
- These swales have the potential to move a lot of soil of a field
- Grassland waterways are broad, shallow and saucer-shaped channels designed to move surface water without causing erosion

Application for Agricultural Improvement Iniatitve

Lower Thames Conservation

Application Information:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

Phone No.: _____

Email Address: _____

Farm Type: ☐ Cash Cropping ☐ Livestock ☐ Hobby Farm Other: _____

Acres farmed: _____ Acres owned: _____

If livestock farming, indicate the number of animals and what type: _____

Indicate the average crop rotation: _____

What are the main tillage practices on your farm: ☐ No Till ☐ Conservation Till ☐ Conventional Till

What are the soil types generally found on your farm? _____

Project Details:

Project Location:

911 Address: _____ Township: _____

County: _____ Lot: _____ Concession: _____

Project Details:

Project Information:

Do you have an Environmental Farm Plan (3rd or 4th edition) _____

Proposed project start date: _____

Please check the section you are applying for:

☐ Buffer Strips

☐ Improved Stream Crossings

☐ Erosional control structures along stream banks and shorelines

☐ Cover Crops

☐ Fencing to protect shorelines, stream banks, and wetland areas

☐ Tree shelterbelt and windbreak

☐ Grassland Waterways

Estimated cost of project: _____

Provide a description of the project: _____

_____

_____

_____

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