Welcome to Shanlake Farms

The Shannon’s, Dudley, Ruth and their son Raymond, own and operate Shanlake Farms at 2307 Sunbury Rd. on the south end of Dog Lake. Their family has been on the land for 6 generations where they presently farm 265 acres of land, rent 25 acres and milk between 40 and 45 cows two times a day. Dudley has found that a lot has changed over the 70 years he has lived here. When he was young “there were a significant number of farms around our lakes but that is not the case today” Now there are only 3 farms with livestock around Dog Lake. Dudley “finds it concerning that the lake has become almost enclosed with houses and the risks they bring with septic systems that are sometimes questionable”

“The majority of farmers are now enrolling in a program called the “Environmental Farm Plan” where they take a course, then work their way through a binder with sections like protecting waterways and wetlands, safe fuel storage, pesticide use and manure storage.”

The Shannon’s operate their farm respecting an Environmental Farm Plan which they were required to complete in order to operate as a dairy farm in Ontario. Back in the 1980’s they filled out forms, made recommendations for environmental improvements and then submitted a plan to the Ministry of Natural Resources. This peer reviewed plan is then used as a basis for grant applications for projects and materials. The Shannon’s received a grant which allowed them to purchase fencing materials to build a fence along the lake shore to keep the cattle out of the lake; they supplied the labour. They also developed a buffer strip along the fence to absorb nutrients. The Shannon’s received a grant in 2007 to build a manure pit where all the animal waste and water waste from the barns and equipment goes to be stored. The manure from this pit is then spread and mixed with the soil on the fields where crops are grown. The soil and the manure are tested and thus, the Shannon’s know what, if any, extra fertilizer is needed for each crop and field. Corn needs ample nitrogen, soy does well with manure nutrients only and sometimes sulphur is needed. Over time, the crops will take nutrients out of the soil, so testing helps them know what supplementary nutrients are needed to keep the soil healthy and in turn grow healthy

crops.

The Shannons hire an operator to spread their manure on the fields, whose license depends on a number of regulations: they do not spread near the buffer strip along the lakeshore and they do not spread when rain is forecasted so as to minimize nutrient run-off.

The Shannons have tile drainage in their fields. The fields drain by gravity and their fields flow to the south of their property; away from the lake. The tile drainage is good for growing crops as it takes excess water away from the crops.

Dudley and his family care very much about Dog Lake and have taken the environmental initiatives on their farm very seriously. Dudley acknowledged that he has seen the lake turn green in August and September each year for 30 years. He also noted that the weeds were much worse 10 years ago than they are now. We all have a role to play in keeping the lake as healthy as possible and we can learn a lot about this from the Shannon family. The DCLA Board of Directors would like to express their sincere appreciation for the time and insights that the Shannon’s shared with us! We are fortunate to have such conscientious neighbours on the lake!