

FARMING & OUR ENVIRONMENT



Snow begone

The last of the winter's snow melted away at Ardwyn Farms on Pinehurst Road earlier this month. The Guhrle family grows a wide selection of vegetables without the use of herbicides or pesticides.

Lance photo

Bicycle Tourism a good fit for Brant County

In early March, Ontario by Bike hosted a Cycle Tourism Conference.

Speakers from Canada, the U.S., Europe and Australia gave presentations on cycle tourism destinations, marketing cycle tourism, serving cycle tourists, and measuring the economic impact of cycle tourism.

Cycling is one of the fastest growing tourism sectors in Canada and holds great economic potential for Brant County with its excellent trail system.

In Ontario, there are over 1.6 million cycling visits per year, with cycling visitors spending over \$517 million — and growing every year. The average cycling visitor spends about \$317 per trip, almost twice that of other visitors. Under the Liberal government in Ontario, cycling tourism flourished because of the funds put into cycling infrastructure by the province and municipalities.

Cycling tourism in Germany has 4.5 million cycle tourists per year, creating 186,000 jobs and bringing in over \$13.6 billion per year with 31.5 million overnight stays. The average cycling tourist is 48 years old, and travels 45 to 60 kilometres per day. These tourists like to stop along the way to eat, see points of interest, and find accommodation.

Germany and several other European countries have developed a "bed and bike" network with breakfast, lockable bike shelters, local tourism information, repair kits, and room to dry clothes and equipment. Each trail system has signage and rest areas. E-bikes are growing in popularity and enable older people to enjoy cycling.

Here in Brant County, Grand Experiences is providing cycling and bike-canoa trips.

The Trans Canada Trail running from Hamilton to Brantford is one of many beautiful trails in the area, and runs through Hearts Content Organic Farm near Jerseyville. The farm will be hosting cyclists for guided medicinal and edible plant tours with Richard Tunstall, a naturopathic doctor and organic farmer.



Cyclists will also have the option for farm stay, either camping or staying in self-contained suites.

For more information see <https://hcol.ca/farmstay/>.

For more information on how to become a bike friendly business, see www.ontariobybike.ca/industry/how-to-add-your-business.

To see details on all of the speakers at the Cycle Tourism Conference, go to www.ontariobybike.ca/ctc19-presentations.

— Ella Haley, Hearts Content Organic Farm, Jerseyville

Power down for Earth Hour and all year round

Energy+ challenged its 65,000 customers in Cambridge, the Township of North Dumfries, the County of Brant, and areas around Brantford, to power down, turn off lights and reduce energy use during Earth Hour on Saturday, Mar. 30 from 8:30 to 9:30 p.m.

Earth Hour is a symbolic reminder of the power of conservation, but it is no substitute for adopting proactive, energy saving habits, every hour of the day, every day of the year, said Ian Miles, Energy+'s President & CEO, in a recent statement.

Energy+ reminded customers of convenient online tools designed to help them understand and manage their energy consumption and utility account, anytime and anywhere.

The online portal My Account Online provides detailed hourly, weekly and monthly consumption data, and access to account information, billing, payment information, and electronic copies of bills.

Customers can also go to the Current Time-of-Use Indicator Tool at www.energyplus.ca, to help lower energy costs, and shift energy use whenever possible, to the lowest cost off-peak period

Farmers can apply now for cover crop payment

Cover crops grown over the winter on agricultural fields are just the right thing to do, according to some local producers who participated in a Grand River Conservation Authority (GRCA) program and received an incentive payment last year.

Applications for the cover crop program can be submitted in August for payment in spring 2020. The per-acre incentive is offered to applicants in Wellington, Brant, Haldimand and Dufferin counties, as well as Waterloo Region, through the GRCA's Rural Water Quality Program (RWQP).

The benefits of cover crops are numerous — they can reduce erosion, build better soil structure and improve soil health. Cover crops also help reduce runoff into local waterways, ultimately improving overall watershed health.

"Cover crops are a simple and cost-effective way of feeding the soil and minimizing erosion," said Steve Lake of Elora. "With cover crops and no-till practices, we are protecting local water quality and building a more resilient soil for the future."

Other producers agree. Over the last five years, more than 235 producers in Brant, Waterloo, Wellington, Dufferin and Haldimand counties received the cover crop incentive payment. Priority is given to erosion-prone fields next to watercourses or wetlands and areas that are susceptible to wind erosion. Fields that are tile drained or in wellhead protection areas are also considered. Cover crops that

are used solely for cover and not harvested or grazed are eligible under the program.

The incentive rate varies by county program and is between \$20 and \$100 per acre. Municipalities fund the Rural Water Quality Program and the GRCA administers the initiative on their behalf.

More information is available about the cover crop program by contacting the GRCA at ruralwater@grandriver.ca or calling 519-821-2761 and asking to speak to a conservation specialist.

To learn more about the broad range of services and grants that are available through the GRCA, including forestry and environmental programs, visit www.grandriver.ca/ruralwater.

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