

Soil Health Producer Highlights Series

My Farm, My Soil, My Story

Marj Veno—Hanna, AB

* What does “Soil Health” mean to you and why is it important?

Soil health compares to your personal health. Whenever everything works the way it should, you feel good. Soil is much the same. When all things are working in balance, our grazing season is much longer, cattle gain better, and the general appearance of the prairie is healthy.

* What management practices have you used to improve soil health on your operation?

Have stockpiled native forages to be used for winter grazing, swath grazed, bale grazed, grazed tame pastures in spring to allow native pasture to set seed, built dugouts so there is a good water source on every quarter of land we own.

* What changes have you seen?

Much even grazing so some areas that were traditionally overgrazed because they were close to water are healthy stands of native grass. Have trees growing along riparian areas and bluffs of trees growing on some prairie that was burned off in the early 1900's.

* What are the biggest challenges for soil health in your area?

Rainfall or the lack of it.

* How do you advocate for soil health?

Share our experiences with other producers at meetings etc. Show our winter grazing and how we make it work. Mother Nature is still the boss and we do have sufficient feed on hand if snow gets too deep.

* Do you have any future plans for improving the Soil Health on your operation?

Getting and keeping invasive weeds under control, continued vigilance reading the grass and being flexible to change a grazing rotation if it will improve soil health and consequently the grass quality and amount.

* How has improving your soil health improved other aspects of your operation?

Stockpiling native grass has put a good layer of thatch on the ground that keeps the moisture in the ground. Have seen a much thicker, healthier and more diverse prairie plant stand. I think it all starts with good management of what's on top of the soil and consequently the soil given a chance will improve quickly and directly affect your bottom line.



Marj farms with her family outside of Hanna, AB on primarily Native Prairie and is a member of the Chinook Applied Research Association based in Oyen, AB.



The Chinook Applied Research Association (CARA) is a driven by farmers and ranchers in east central Alberta to bring innovative and profitable practices to the local agricultural industry. Our program of applied research, demonstration and extension projects provides a link in the transfer of knowledge and technology between research and the producer. Producers, industry, government and others can access reliable data on crop, live-stock, soil and water projects that is relevant to the area and its soil and climatic conditions.

