

## Farm and Non-Farm Landowner Values

About two years ago, a number of CCA members, who were rural landowners, participated in a focus group session organized by the University of Guelph. It took place at the Belfountain Community Centre.

The students who organized the event were gathering data for their PhD program with the Centre for Land and Water Stewardship at the University of Guelph.

Their findings are presented below.

Workshops were held in 2002 and 2003 in Huron County, Grey County and Caledon. Their overall findings, as presented at the A.D. Latornell Conservation Symposium in November 2003, were:

1. Farmers and non-farm rural residents perceive some conflicts including conflicts over farming practices, water quality and other environmental issues, and traffic.
2. Farmers see environmental practices through the filters of economic costs, and social factors, while rural non-farm residents tend to see environmental issues in terms of aesthetics and environmental health, including recreation opportunities.
3. Both groups share an underlying concern for the rural environment as a place to live, with its peace, quiet and privacy, and both tend to be committed to stewardship.

The longer list of issues that need attention include:

- Impacts of severance and land or residence rentals
- Availability of local schools and community sustainability
- Improvements in local services such as road maintenance and snow clearing
- Participation or non-participation in local communities
- Changing farms and farm practices
- Environmental issues including water quality
- Increasing rules and regulations and loss of independence.
- Income and affordability of land
- Traffic

The report goes on:

While attitudes to these issues vary between farmers and non-farmers, both share a love of living in a rural location, and identify the community, neighbours, recreation, space, privacy, peace and quiet, the natural environment, fresh air, etc. as important values of rural areas.

Rural non-farmers clearly include farms with their crops, livestock, houses and barns, as an important part of their view of the countryside, and identify well-kept farmsteads as a positive feature of the rural community.

Rural non-farmers also identify safety and freedom from crime and trespass, and a sense of local history and community as important.

Farmers also identify family, pride and independence, a sense of their 'roots' in the community, their way of life and (for some), their livestock as important.

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