

October 2008

Spirit Creek Watershed Monitoring Committee has now completed eight years of monitoring soil, air quality, water, odour, manure, earthen manure storage at and around the three Big Sky Hog barns.

These barns are located in the Rama area as well as part of the Upper Assiniboine River basin flowing into Spirit Creek, then into Good Spirit Lake. This type of undertaking has never been done before in Canada. We knew what was out there before any hog manure was injected or stored, before any pigs were in the barns.

The three barns produce 170,000 pigs per year. A total of 94 million litres of manure is being recycled into the soil each year. Soil tests and crop results prove that hog manure (fertilizer) is now a welcome nutrient source.

**Soil Testing** - ongoing for another four years

**Water Sampling** - A total 500 samples have been taken of wells and 59 dugouts, within a three mile radius of each hog barn.

**Runoff Samples** - Samples were collected each spring at approximately nineteen sites, since 2001. These samples were collected up and down stream of each hog barn and on land which received hog manure. Each participant received a copy of their water results at no cost. Presently we are not doing wells and dugouts, if there is a concern to go back sampling, we would.

**Odour** - Our first three years we received number of odour concerns, mostly when manure was being injected. The last three years there have been no odour concerns. We are now hearing more of the benefits of the hog barns e.g. cheap fertilizer, sell grain locally, employment and community support.

It makes good sense for everyone to work together to balance our economy, and our environment for today and for the future. Our Committee can help make this work.

The Committee would like to thank all the stakeholders for eight years of support and commitment. We especially would like to thank the Ministry of Agriculture for their technical and financial support.

The long term sampling will highlight trends or areas of concern. We plan to update our water sampling to utilize flow meters and composite sampling to establish a better understanding of quantitative stream loading of nutrients and other chemicals.

Yours truly,

Don Walters,  
Chairperson,  
Spirit Creek Watershed