Environment

MAAP restores gravel pits to farm land -

AL MURRAY: BEFORE



AL MURRAY: AFTER

licensed. They are often wayside pits of less than five acres.

MAAP works with landowners to rehabilitate these sites, improving their use, whether for farming or natural habitat. The program aims to do 30 projects a year - half in the spring and half in the fall, and tries to concentrate its efforts in one location at a time in order to be most efficient.

CES ANDERSON

Delgrave-area dairy D farmer, Murray Thomp-

son, got two acres more

workable land this fall, and

Allan Murray, who farms

Their farmland was restored under a rehabilitation pro-

gram for abandoned gravel

pits, called MAPP (Manage-

(MAAP). It's operated by

The Ontario Aggregate

There are as many as 5500

pits and quarries across the

province deemed "aban-

doned" because they existed

prior to 1990 when the Aggre-

Burlington.

The writer lives in Exeter

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of cropland, for free!

Thompson and Murray near Seaforth, got five acres were among a dozen landowners in Huron County with pits rehabilitated his past fall. Next spring, it will be in Northumberland.

"We had no plans to be in ment of Abandoned Aggre- Huron County, but we had a gate Properties Program lot of calls," said project coordinator Danielle Solondz.

Murray was one of the call-Resources Corporation ers. He learned about MAAP (TOARC), based in through a local landscaper, Paul Vander Molen, and has been lobbying for the program ever since he bought a farm with an old gravel pit three years ago.

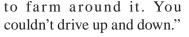
"It was in the middle of a gate Resources Act was field, and a real inconvepassed, and have never been nience," said Murray. "I had



MURRAY THOMPSON: BEFORE

MAAP project co-ordinator **Danielle Solondz**





supervisor Paul Hartnett visited Murray's farm and took soil samples. The topsoil was three feet deep in some favourite type of rehabilitaplaces, so he could recontour the field and still have enough topsoil to crop.

"They were a great bunch. They done what I wanted and we worked together on it. I helped out with a mini-excavator, relocating tiles," Murray told Ontario Farmer. material on site.

"It was all done within a week....I'll be planting it into hole to fill a hole." Furthersoybeans this spring."

approached Thompson because MAAP was working pit in 1985, to get gravel to improve his farm yards, but the pit was in the middle of the farm and created a five metre drop, posing a danger for anyone working the field.

Again, Hartnett took photos of the site, and soil samples, and came up with a plan that used the existing topsoil.

moving was done in three useable. MAAP's construction days, Thompson said. He has the area to hay field.

> Agriculture "is actually my tion because I like seeing unproductive land put back in be done. production," said Hartnett, who has a degree in landscape to the landowner," said Hartarchitecture. However, "each site is unique and not all sites can go back to agriculture.

more, "it's usually cost pro-In contrast, Hartnett hibitive to bring in topsoil because of trucking costs. We don't import "fill" because you bring in."

In a lot of cases, the plan is to strip off existing top soil, – which is the safe grade for a tractor from a design perspective – and then to have a balance of topsoil."

"I test with a mini excava- son both recommend it. tor to see the depth of top The process required a soil," said Hartnett. If there's said Murray. "For sure!" couple of site visits over six eight inches he usually has agreed Thompson.

months, but the actual land enough to make most sites

Once the landowners now seeded it down to return approve the plans, Hartnett holds a mandatory pre-bid meeting for contractors where they visit all the sites in the area and discuss the work to

> "There's absolutely no cost nett. "I do the design and the low bid wins the contract."

Gravel pit owners pay a He tries to work with the licence fee of 11.5 cents per tonne of aggregate they "It's not like we create a remove, and half a cent of that is designated to MAAP, generating about a half million dollars per year.

Since the MAAP program began in 1997, it has spent in the area. He had opened a there's a liability with what \$6.3 million to rehabilitate over 1300 acres at 320 sites.

> This amounts to about \$5,000 to restore each acre of regrade the land to a 5:1 slope land. With farmland selling for \$10,000 an acre, it's good value for landowners restoring gravel pits to cropland.

> > Both Murray and Thomp-

"Absolutely, no question!"

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