

County Woodlots Vanish, Planning Director Says

Lancaster County has hardly any more woodland than the city of Philadelphia, County Soil Conservation District Directors and Associate Directors were told Monday night.

C. Bilkley Foster, Lancaster County Planning Director, told the conservationists that urban sprawl is putting a greater burden on the farmer than any other segment of the population.

Foster outlined the developments taking place in the county and proposed to the farmers present that they begin an immediate program to develop a county plan.

"First you must decide what kind of a county you want," Foster said, and then the detailed plans can be worked out. At the present time, Lancaster is fourth from the bottom in a list of counties according to the percentage of remaining woodland. With only 13.7 per cent of our land area in trees, Lancaster county has barely more woodland than the city of Philadelphia, he said.

Foster pointed out the absence of any large public parks in the county and the difficulty and prohibitive expense involved in purchasing enough acreage in the county for a park.

By use of a series of maps showing the development of housing areas around the city and boroughs, the planning director showed the group heavy concentrations of dwellings on the two most productive soil types in the county. He also pointed out that the urban growth is taking place in the areas of the county with the poorest water supplies.

With 55 per cent of the county surface area composed of limestone, Lancaster County is one of the best agricultural areas but one of the poorest for building, Foster said. He said buildings and roads have been known to cave in from caverns in the limestone. Sewage disposal and water supply become a tremendous problem in the limestone areas.

In 1958 and '59 water samples from one third of all wells and springs tested on request were found to be unfit for human consumption. During those two years the Pennsylvania Department of Health condemned 483 wells and springs as contaminated. In addition, every migrant labor camp in the county in 1959 was found to have contaminated water supplies.

The problem of sewage disposal is not now a serious problem for the farmer, but where houses are pushed closer and closer together, the problem becomes more and more difficult.

As the urban areas (or rural areas as Foster defines an area which goes directly from rural to urban without going through the suburban stage) push further into the farmlands demands for utilities will push the taxes for the farmer higher and higher.

Foster cited examples in

houses are built and new way in taxes.

He said Lancaster county services are demanded, taxes go still higher and the cycle to decide just what kind of try and agriculture, but tax builds. Foster said Berks County planners have found push for zoning laws to level. He said too many farmers fight zoning laws because unless a house costs help produce the desired results it does not pay its suits.

Foster urged the farmers has a good balance of industry and agriculture, but taxes are levied on a township level. He said too many farmers fight zoning laws because (Turn to page 11)

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