

## 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 boros, 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 suburban 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

the county where developments first requested streets then lights, curbs, and police protection. Next came the request for public water, and in every case the installation of public water without public sewage disposal brought on much greater contamination of water supplies.

With the request for services in suburban areas, township officials are forced to raise taxes on the farmer. Many farmers have tried to meet the tax burden by selling off a lot or two for development, but as soon as a farmer sells off one lot he is in a vicious cycle, Foster said.

As soon as one or two new


houses are built and new way in taxes.

services are demanded, taxes go still higher and the cycle builds. Foster said Berks County planners have found that unless a house costs \$1,800 it does not pay its

He said Lancaster county has a good balance of industry and agriculture, but to decide just what kind of a county they want and then es are levied on a township push for zoning laws to level. He said too many farmers fight zoning laws be-

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