

Supermarket Service In The War Against Waste

Editor's Note: This is the fourth of five articles describing how the Lancaster County Soil Conservation District came into being. The last article will be printed next week.

Supermarket Service in Soil Conservation
Need advice on building a fence, canning pickles, cutting turf, or building a farm pond? This is only a sample of the wide variety and wealth of

information and services available through our government agencies.

Here in Pennsylvania, representatives from all levels of government are encouraging sound land management practices. Let's take a look at some of the solutions experts who assist soil conservation districts have devised to conquer our land management problems.

Conservation Practices
The most basic problems in Pennsylvania are soil erosion and water control. The US Soil Conservation Service specializes in these problems. Cultivated land creates the worst erosion problems since there aren't enough plants to hold all the soil in place.

Instead of running corn rows up and down hill, soil conservationists recommend turning the row around perpendicular to the slope. Each corn row then becomes a tiny check dam instead of a drainage ditch. Row crops should also be planted in long strips about 50 to 100 feet wide.

These are alternated with strips of grass or other close growing cover crops which form a sod to hold the soil in place. This "new look" in agriculture is called contour strip-cropping.

If this doesn't do the job, gutter-like terraces can be built to catch the water and channel it around the hill. The experts call these diversion terraces. Controlling surface water doesn't always do the whole job either, and the SCS technicians go underground to solve drainage problems with tile lines.

Not only can soils be rejuvenated from former abuse, they can be improved. Through the skills of the Agricultural Extension Service at The Pennsylvania State University, soil is tested and lime and fertilizer additions and rotations recommended to make the land more productive than ever before.

Conservation farmers are learning not to ignore their woodlots. They know that cows produce milk from grass, not trees. Once the woods are fenced off a forestier from the State Department of Forests and Waters helps initiate a scientific tree management program. By leaving enough good trees to maintain a continuous forest, land owners and timber operators find they can harvest a fine crop of timber as often as every 10 years.

Healthy soil produces healthy plants, healthy plants produce healthy wildlife. Some of the first conservation practices in Pennsylvania appeared on land owned by the Pennsylvania Game Commission. Long, narrow fields and terraces not only protect the soil, they serve as handy travel lanes for farm game. Landowners especially interested in attracting wildlife can install additional practices. For example, the thorns of a hedge can replace barbed wire.

The edges of a woodlot can be cut to eliminate shaded areas in cropland and produce brushy areas to shelter wildlife. Saving a few hollow trees in the woods will furnish good apartment houses for birds and animals.

Fishermen are glad to have the farmer keep his soil at home. Fish don't particularly care for muddy breathing. If the landowner is interested in luring fish to his stream, the best fellow to see is the local fish warden for the Pennsylvania Fish Commission. If you have a farm pond, he can help you to create the best possible fishing in it.

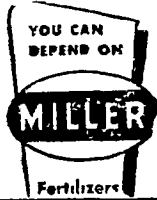
Our modern civilization uses land for more than farming. It has to have buildings and highways. Conservation farming keeps our farms off the highways and the Pennsylvania Department of Highways can, in turn, coordinate highway drainage with farm drainage.

Education a Basic Job
In addition to this team of technical advisers helping landowners through soil conservation districts, there is an educational team. County Agents spend much of their time passing along information received from the Experiment Station at Penn State. The Vocational Agricultural program in training farmers and agricultural workers for the future in creating new conservationists.

Conservation pays! But at times it's difficult, financially, for the farmer to get started in his conservation program. To aid him, the federal government has set up a cost-sharing program.

There is an Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Committee in every county to help the farmer install conservation practices. Another federal agency, the Farmers Home Administration, makes low interest loans available to farmers who want to improve their farming operations.

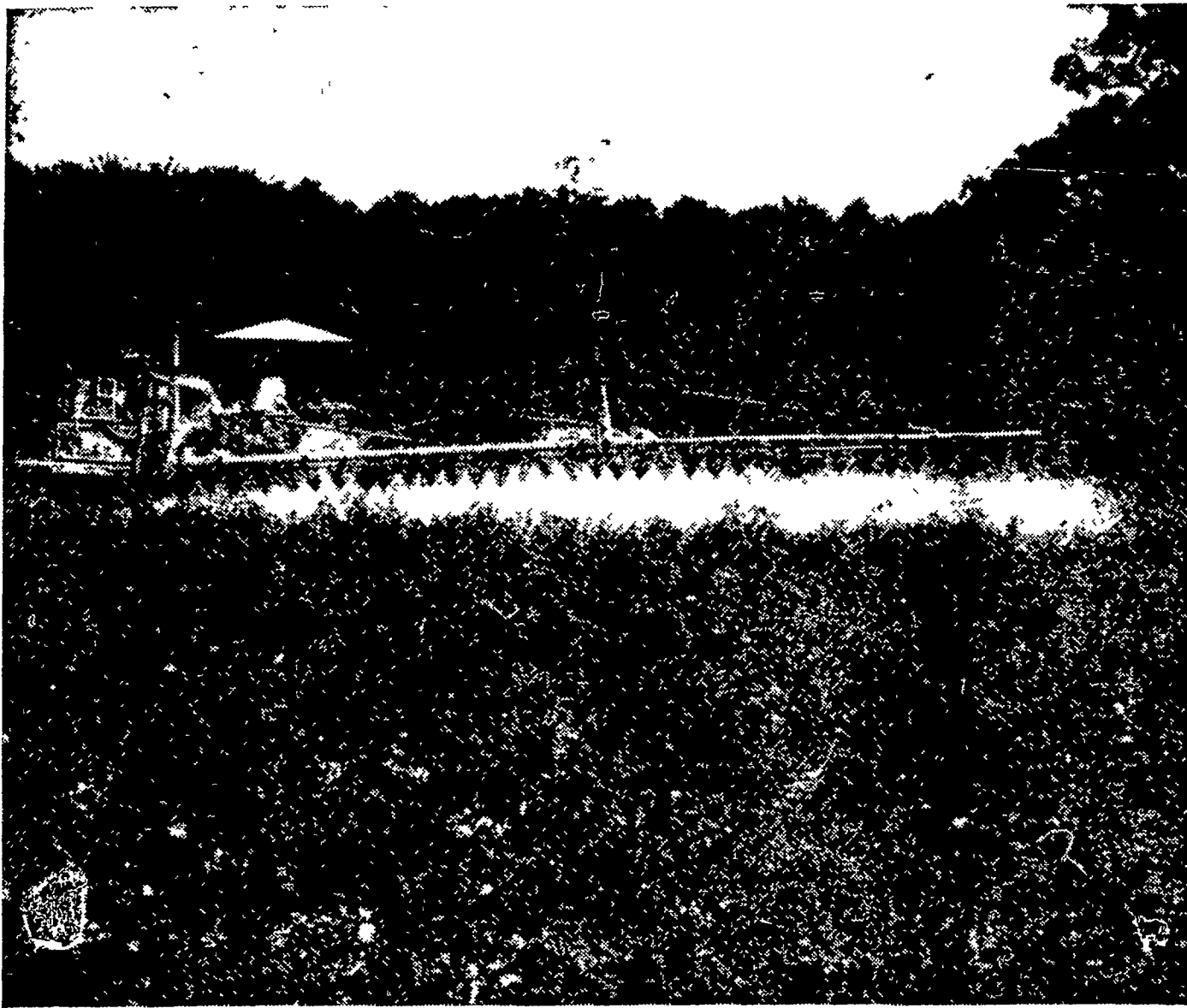
The many different kinds of available services, keyed to different needs, may be confusing to the landowners. The average farmer may wonder: can I obtain service for my problems, and if so, which agency should I see? Helping to overcome this confusion is one (Continued on Page 3)



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