

## Environmentalists Express Concern on Farmland Stretch With Population Growth, 2nd Home Boom

Urban areas, which already contain 66 percent of the nation's population, are destined to expand into still more farm acreage despite recent challenges by environmentalists to the pace of development.

That is the forecast of a citizens' task force in a report that offers hope for reconciling some of the deep and growing differences between forces stimulating growth and those of unyielding conservation.

Though the task force, headed by Laurance S. Rockefeller, is critical of "unrestrained, piecemeal urbanization," it recognizes that "the needs of the American population can be met only through continuing development."

The 12-member group found all indicators pointing to a further spread of urban land area. Stimulated by affluence, the pace of land consumption exceeds both the increase in population growth and the rate of household formations, even though within the next 12 years more than 27,000 new households are anticipated every week. That is the equivalent to the weekly creation of a city the size of Green Bay,

Wis.

Set up last September by the White House-mandated Citizens' Advisory Committee on Environmental Quality, the task force was sponsored by the Rockefeller Brothers Fund. Its report will be published next month in book form as *The Use of Land: A Citizens' Policy Guide to Urban Growth* by Thomas Y. Crowell Company of New York.

Much of the rapid conversion of rural land is caused by the enormous demand of Americans for second or recreational homes, the research team found. It gave these statistics:

"There are now about 2.9 million second or recreational homes in America, up from 1.7 million in 1967. It has been estimated that 95,000 second or resort homes were started in 1971, up from an estimated average of 20,000 per year in the 1940s, 40,000 per year in the 1950s, and 75,000 per year in the 1960s. The estimated annual demand for second homes is expected to reach 200,000 by 1980."

But more significant in terms of inroads into the supply of rural land is a task force finding that "rural lots are being created far

faster than second homes. For the nation as a whole at least six recreational lots were sold in 1971 for every second home started."

The task force believes "livable, ecologically sound recreational communities" should be encouraged, but it urged states and local jurisdictions to prevent lot sales where such communities are unlikely to be developed.

Recognizing that the nation's open space needs cannot be met solely with publicly owned land, the task force urges identification of privately owned land that should be preserved in a natural state, including uniquely productive or strategically located farm lands.

It urges, however, that measures that provide tax relief to farms in urbanizing areas be re-examined. The rationale for such measures, in effect in half the states, is that the predictable rise in property taxes in urban fringes tends to "drive the farmer off the land."

The task force believes that such tax relief is justified only when the land assessed in current use is truly worthy of preservation, and is to be conserved permanently in farm use. Tax reductions in the absence of permanent restrictions should be regarded as halfway measures, the group maintains.

The task force is hopeful about changed public attitudes that have resulted in the evolution of strict environmental criteria in many areas. It believes new institutions and policies governing land use are needed to meet "new expectations of managed growth."

The group views the carrot-and-stick provisions of pending federal land-use legislation as the best hope for encouraging states to begin the needed institutional reforms. The bills, one of which cleared the Senate last year, would authorize from \$170 to \$800 million over five years in grants to states for help with land-use planning and regulation. One of them also would impose sanctions on non-complying states in the form of cuts in airport, highways, and land and water conservation funds.

On the other hand, the task force concludes that specific decisions about the use of land should be left to the states and individual communities.

The bulk of its report consists of recommended strategies, addressed selectively to citizen groups and governments at all levels, for shaping policies that will insure rational development and at the same time protect and improve the environment.

Besides Mr. Rockefeller, the task force includes Paul N. Ylvisaker, dean of the graduate school of education, Harvard University, who served as deputy chairman; Mayor Pete Wilson of San Diego, Henry L. Diamond, commissioner of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation; John F. Collins, former mayor of Boston, now consulting professor of urban affairs at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology; John R. Crowley, chairman, Colorado Land Use Commission; Walter E. Hoadley, executive vice president, Bank of America National Trust and Savings Association, A Wesley

Hodge, a Seattle land-use lawyer; Vernon E. Jordon, executive director, National Urban League; Mrs. Virginia Nugent, chairman, National Land Use Committee, League of Women Voters; John R. Price, Jr., vice president, Manufacturers Hanover Trust Company; and James W. Rouse, chairman of the Rouse Company and founder of the new town of Columbia, Md.

William K. Reilly, a lawyer-planner on leave from the Council on Environmental Quality, serves as staff director.

Among the task force's other major recommendations:

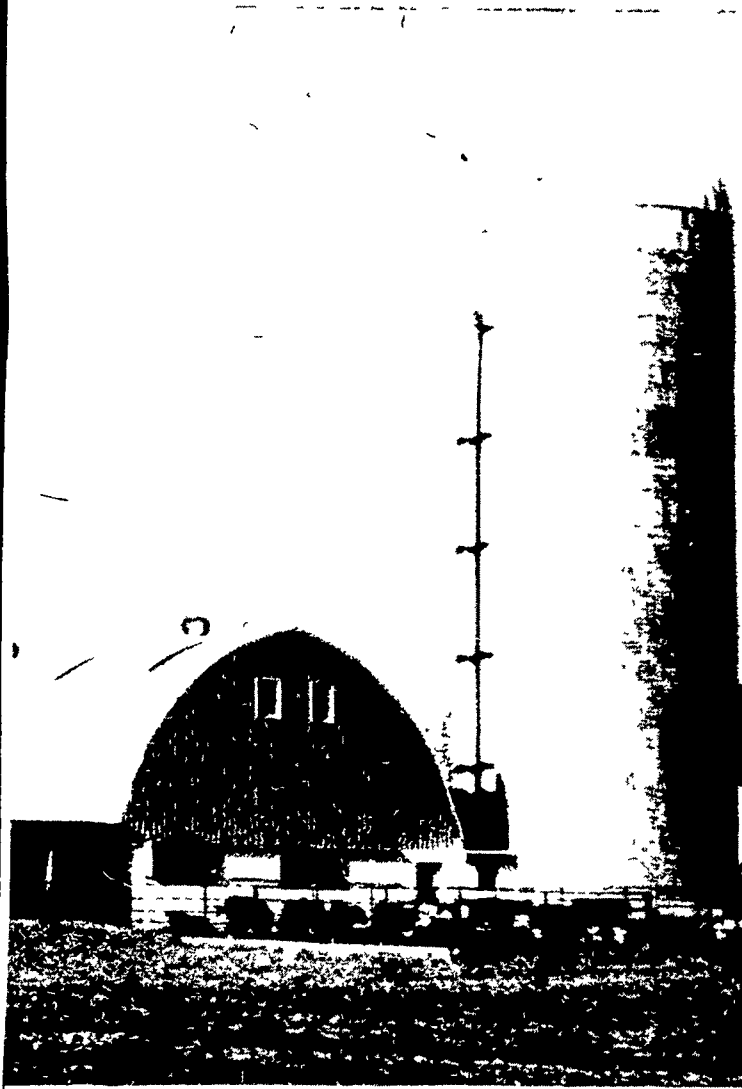
1. Where protected areas are carefully selected as the result of a comprehensive planning process, states should authorize and encourage very low density zoning, "including requirements for 50 or more acres per permitted dwelling unit."

2. A National Lands Trust should be established either within the Interior Department or by federal charter. It should have federal funding of \$200 million annually, to be made available on a matching basis with a 75-percent federal share to assist public bodies in the designation, planning, and conservation of extensive green spaces in and around major urbanizing areas.

3. The federal government should encourage open space protection by formulating, mapping, and publicizing a set of advisory national open space classifications for consultation by federal, state, and local officials and private land buyers and sellers.

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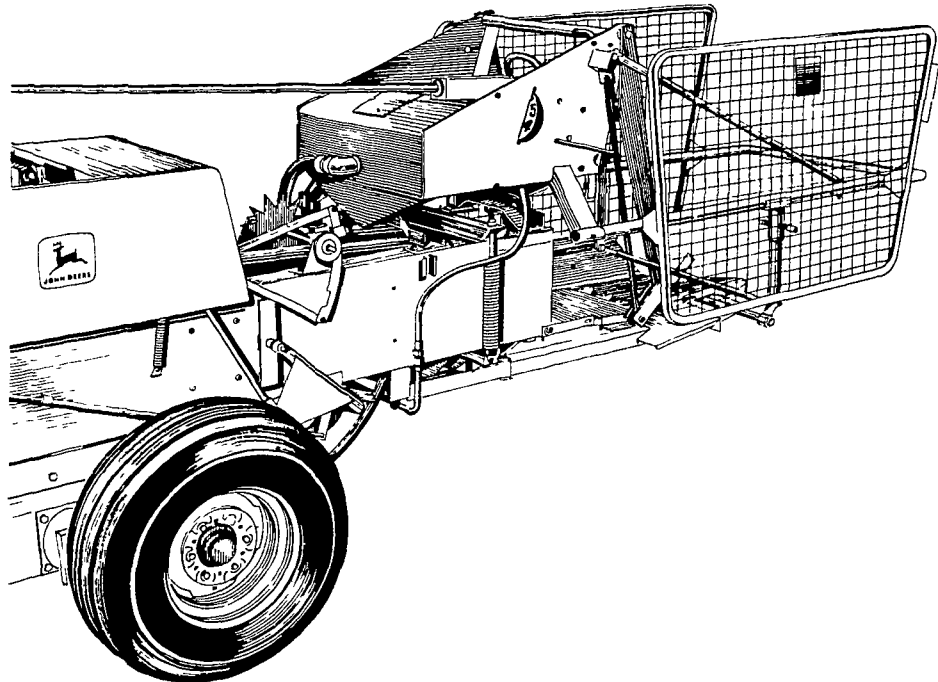
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