

State ASC Officials Discuss RECP Plans

Development of the 1974 Rural Environmental Conservation Program (RECP) in Pennsylvania will get underway immediately, according to John M. Phillips, Chairman of the Pennsylvania Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Committee (ASC). Pennsylvania ASCS officials have just returned from Washington, D. C. where they met with Washington officials to learn details of this new conservation cost-sharing program.

Attending the Washington meeting from Pennsylvania were ASC State com-

mitteemen: John M. Phillips, North East; Noah W. Wenger, Stevens, and Claude R. Hetherington, Zion Grove. Representing the State ASCS office in Harrisburg were: Kenneth H. Boyer, State Executive Director, and Richard A. Pennay, Program Specialist. Officials of other Federal and State agencies also attended the 2-day session.

At the meeting they were told it is essential each State develop an RECP that "will strengthen conservation and environmental protection measures on American farms, and encourage the

development, management, and protection of non-industrial private forest lands." Discussion leader for the conference was Ray Hunter, director of the ASCS Environmental Quality and Land Use Division.

In outlining the goals of RECP, Hunter told the State officials, "The goals are to improve the quality of life, for all people, by improving the environment, providing the maximum public benefit with the funds available, and by conserving the land and related natural resources. This is to assure a continuing ability to produce food and fiber necessary for the maintenance of a strong, healthy people and economy, while providing for wildlife, and other environmental enhancement."

According to Kenneth H. Boyer, State ASCS



Noah W. Wenger, Stevens, second from left, was among the Pennsylvania ACS committeemen in Washington recently to go over details of the new Rural En-

vironmental Conservation Program. Also in the photo are, left to right, John M. Phillips, North East, Wenger, Kenneth H. Boyer, Harrisburg, Eddie Hews, Washington, and Claude R. Hetherington, Zion Grove.

Major Land Uses Inventoried

About 80 percent of the more than 2 billion acres of land in the United States is used for crops, pasture, and forestry, according to a report released by the U. S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Economic Research Service.

The report, based on data from the 1969 Census, USDA agencies, and other sources, shows that one-fifth of the total area is devoted to

crops, more than one-fourth is permanent grassland pasture, and one-third is forest land. The rest is distributed among urban and transportation uses (less than 3 percent); recreational, wildlife, and other extensive special uses (5 percent); and unclassified areas including Alaskan tundra (13 percent).

In recent decades, there has been little change in the

distribution of land among major agricultural and forestry uses. Acreages of both cropland and permanent grassland declined slightly, prior to 1973's cropland increase. However, total production, thanks to rising yields, increased significantly. Forest land area has held almost stable nationally, as losses to agricultural, urban, and other uses in some regions have been largely offset by reversion of open land to forest in other regions.

Special uses of land, particularly urban and recreational uses, continue to expand at the expense of agricultural and forestry uses. However, the special uses represent a small and slowly increasing share. Use for urban expansion, highways, roads, airports, and reservoirs, for example, requires an additional 1.2 million acres of land a year.

Three-fifths of the land, and nearly all the more valuable acreage, is privately owned.

Executive Director, "RECP incorporates features from the old Rural Environmental Assistance Program (REAP), in addition to the new, expanded scope of the 1974 RECP. This year's program includes cost-sharing through annual or long-term agreements, and an extra emphasis on treeplanting for timber production, called forestry incentives. Details of these programs will be made available to landowners by county personnel in the very near future", he said.

The program is administered by the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service through its farmer-elected committee system. The Soil Conservation Service (SCS), Forest Service and the State Forestry Agency will provide technical assistance, planning, and policy recommendations. The Extension Service will provide educational support. Edward H. Hanson,

Director of USDA's Office of Field Operations, discussed the Department's new "one-stop service" concept now being developed for farmers and other rural residents. This new concept is aimed at combining, under one roof, the services of four USDA agencies — ASCS, Farmers Home Administration (FHA), the Soil Conservation Service (SCS), and the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation (FCIC). Administrative committees in each State are currently

developing plans for this one-stop service.

The Washington meeting was one of four similar meetings held across the country in order to bring program details to those who will administer them at the State level.

"Dates after which requests for cost-sharing assistance can be accepted will be announced soon after the completion of development meetings by the State and County ASC Committees.

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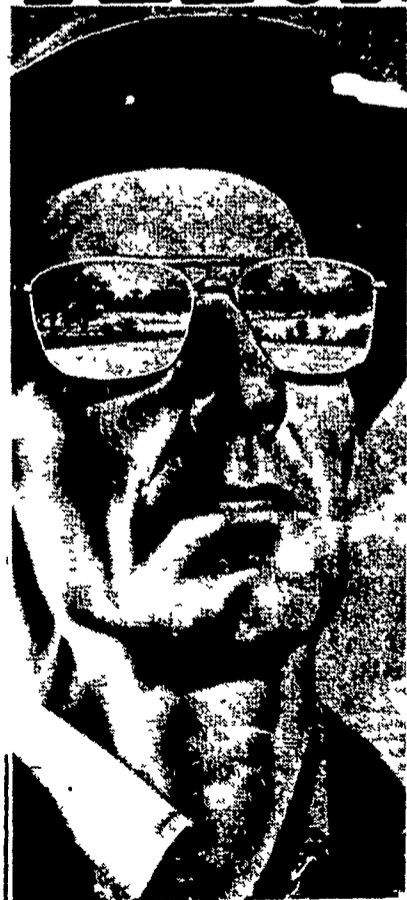
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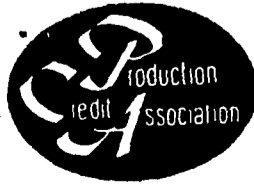


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