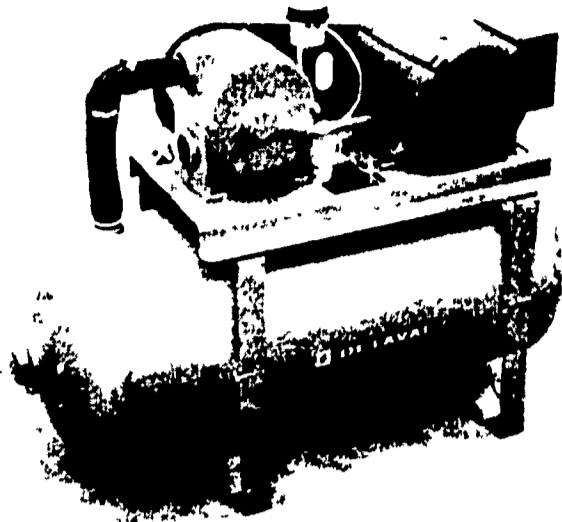


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Ag Plans

[Continued from Page 20]

farmer will be cited for soil erosion if he is following a plan prepared by SCS. So if a farmer wants to be absolutely certain that he'll be exempted from the penalty provisions of the Clean Streams Law, then he should get an SCS plan," Martin said.

"But, it is a fact that many farmers without plans are doing excellent jobs of controlling erosion. They've seen how others have stopped erosion and they've done the job without any help from SCS. If they continue to do a good job, they'll never hear from DER, and they'll never have to worry."

Martin pointed out that SCS couldn't possibly have prepared plans for all Pennsylvania farms by 1977. He said that in Pennsylvania's 66 Conservation Districts, some 39,800 plans have been written. But, he said, close to 37,000 more plans are needed. Of that number, some 25,000 are new agricultural plans, nearly 1000 are needed on state game lands, and some 10,700 are old farm plans which need to be revised.

"The Conservation Districts are doing a good job of identifying needs and setting priorities," Martin said, "but no matter how well they do their job, we in SCS just don't have the people to handle the workload entailed by a 1977 deadline."

"The districts are trying to reach every farmer in the state. But there will always be some landowners who will never ask for assistance. A-

never ask for assistance. And in Pennsylvania, we of the farmers will never have anything at all to do with a government program."

We asked Martin to expand a bit on the role of Conservation Districts.

Conservation Districts, he said, were established in Pennsylvania by Act 217. They are legal subdivisions of the state government, related to DER in much the same way that local school districts are related to the Pennsylvania Department of Education. They were established to carry out conservation programs on a county-wide basis. They identify conservation needs for their counties, plan work programs for the year and set the priorities which will guide the work of SCS technicians and conservationists.

In addition to SCS, the conservation district can call on county agents, the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service, Pennsylvania Bureau of Forestry, the Pennsylvania Game Commission and government agencies for assistance in dealing with the problems of both farm and non-farm conservation cooperators.

"For this year," Martin noted, "most conservation districts in Pennsylvania have adopted resolutions stating that farm plans are to be given top priority."

But haven't there been significant increases in the number of requests from municipalities and developers, we asked. How well do farmer requests stack up against requests from developers who might have millions tied up in their

Lancaster Farming, Saturday, April 12, 1975—21

projects and who don't want to wait any longer than they have to? Don't the districts get a lot of political pressure to move faster on requests from developers and municipalities?

"It is a problem," Martin replied. "We have to recognize that the districts are responsible for total resource management in their counties, and they do have an obligation to provide this kind of urban assistance. And I don't see any time when we'll end that assistance."

"But SCS is supposed to simply review urban plans for erosion control adequacy. We're not supposed to actually develop the plans. In some cases the districts were not only reviewing plans, they were actually replanning whole projects. And, naturally, when they were doing that, they couldn't be working on farm plans."

"This wouldn't happen if the developers could call on adequately trained sediment control planners outside SCS. Some districts, like Chester County, have developed training programs to teach civil engineers how to draw up plans for urban projects. In those districts, SCS people are now spending less time on urban plans because the plans that do come in are better. They don't need to be redone as often."

Why not run a similar program to train outside people how to develop conservation plans for farms?

"In urban projects," Martin said, "We're dealing mainly with structural

control measures. It takes some training, but not a lot, to know where to put a silt basin or an energy dissipator or some other structure to slow water down enough to drop whatever silt is being carried from, for example, housing development.

"Farm conservation planning is a much more complex subject. The SC-planner must consider structural measures. But he also has to take into consideration soil types, slopes, the kind and amount of tillage on a particular farm, the cropping pattern, how much grazing is required even the farmer's management ability."

"We figure that it takes us two years to train an individual just out of college before he's ready to tackle farm plans. We could train others to do farm plans, but we'd have to recognize that this would be a long term answer to farm conservation planning. It couldn't be done overnight."

"Another thing you've got to realize is that the farm conservation planning job will never be done. When a new owner takes over a farm that's been planned, chances are he'll need a new plan to suit the way he farms. Or a farmer might change his program and need a new plan."

"Our agency - SCS - was and is set up to handle farm conservation planning. And that's where I think we should continue to spend most of our time," Martin concluded.

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