

# Prime farmland mapped

WASHINGTON, D.C. - locations of the nation's "prime farmlands" was published recently by the county maps to show

Soil Conservation Service (SCS), U. S. Department of Agriculture.

The map is of Peach County, Ga., one of 122 counties in 46 states being inventoried this year for a nationwide "Important Farmlands Inventory." Most of the counties have been under intense pressure from urban development. An additional 154 counties have been selected for inventory in 1977.

The agency hopes to complete inventories and publish color maps for each of 1200 counties - or more than one-third of the nation - by 1980.

Prime farmland, for purposes of the SCS inventory, is that land best suited for producing food, feed, forage, fiber and oilseed crops. Farmland already converted to urban uses or highways is not considered prime farmland, even though it may have been at some earlier time. Technical criteria for identification of prime farmland are based on soil characteristics.

The county-by-county survey will provide the detailed information needed to support new department policy, announced June 28, to help keep the nation's best farm, range, and forest

lands from going into non-agricultural uses.

USDA has urged all federal agencies to adopt the policy that federal activities that take prime farmland should be carried out only when there are no suitable alternative sites and when the activity meets an overriding public need.

Many state, county, and municipal officials and planning agencies share USDA's concern for preservation of prime farmlands and are expected to find the maps useful in making their own land use decisions.

SCS estimates that 250 million acres of U.S. lands presently in croplands are prime farmland. That is about two-thirds of the present cropland acreage. Some 24 million additional acres of prime farmland not now being used for crops

could be converted to cropland simply by beginning tillage.


Other prime farmland already has been committed to such uses as high density forest, wildlife areas, and farmsteads and farm roads.

Of prime farmland still available for future cropland use, a sizeable bite is taken each year by urban expansion. Another bite goes under water for lakes and reservoirs. Still more acres are "leap-frogged" by suburbs that build some distance away from urban centers. Leap-frogged acres seem destined eventually to be urbanized unless legislative action is taken to

keep them in farming, according to the conservation agency.

Each county map published by SCS will show the location of prime farmland; additional farmland of statewide or local importance (often useful cropland too sloping to be classified as prime); and "unique" farmland. The latter are those acres particularly well suited for growing a specific crop of high value, like California's avocado area near San Diego; Michigan's red tart cherry region, and cranberry bogs in Massachusetts, New Jersey, and Oregon.

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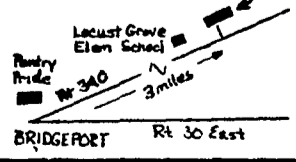
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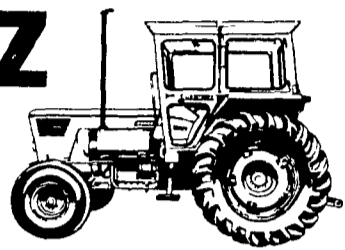


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YORK - Members of the York County 4-H Bee Club received ribbons for their extracted honey and beeswax during the Honey Show sponsored by the York County Beekeepers Association. Those members entering the 4-H class and receiving blue ribbons were John Jacoby, Robert Spahr, and William Spahr. A member receiving a red ribbon was Edward Spahr. The judge for the show was Ralph Gamber from the Dutch Gold Honey Inc., Lancaster.

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