

Conservation speaker tells of future plans

By KENDACE BORRY
 speaker at the 31st annual meeting of the Pa. Association of District Directors, Inc. He spoke at the group's opening luncheon held October 2 at the

Sheraton Berkshire Inn, Reading.

Bauer, who is a wheat and cattle farmer from Harper, Kansas, told his audience that he doesn't have all the answers to the problems facing the conservation districts. He added that as head of the organization he needs advice and hopes to have the wisdom to carry on his duties.

He told of the organization's ability to work together, and how it has grown since its humble beginnings back in 1946. Today it is strongly heard and respected.

Today there are 3,021 conservation districts in the nation, with 2.2 billion acres involved, compared to 1.8 billion acres in 1970.

According to Bauer, conservation districts have



Lyle Bauer

broader authorities today. In 1970, only one state had erosion and sediment control legislation. Now there are 16 states which have such legislation. He noted that the past ten years have seen virtually every state strengthen its district legislation, with the addition of new programs and

authorities and the complete restructuring of the districts themselves, where necessary.

Bauer spoke of the Rural Clean Water Program, stating that it has been a target of misinformation. He said that the RCWP is a new program, tackling water quality problems in high priority areas, using locally developed plans as the base and emphasizing local administration where possible.

He related that the NACD had fought for a principle in the RCWP—the fact that a locally-planned, locally-developed, and locally-administrated voluntary program is what Congress designed the RCWP to be, what the American farmers need, and what the NACD has a chance of doing. The organization took the position that if the project can't be started right, it shouldn't be started at all.

He stressed in his speech that the NACD is looking towards the future, naming some of its concerns.

NACD is concerned about the problem of getting a higher national priority for natural resource programs. He noted that he thinks it is essential for both the economic and environmental well-being of the nation.

"We think a major problem lies in the absence of linkages between food, agriculture and natural resource policies," he stated. "We have seen too many instances where wide-

spread destruction of conservation systems resulted from USDA food or agricultural policy. Today, we see American farmers in serious economic trouble and do not hear solutions proposed that sound promising. One thin is certain: any long-term stability in U.S. agriculture must be based on the wise use and conservation of our soil and water resources. Any strategy that seeks quick profits but destroys the resource base is self-defeating. Any strategy that ties up and fails to effectively use soil and water to produce the goods needed by people is equally unwise."

Bauer told that he has formed a President's select task force to deal with these problems and asked them to make a report soon to NACD.

One proposal, he observed, that "has been around a long time", and is getting more attention right now is what the NACD calls a conservation incentives program. The basic idea of this program is to provide economic incentives to the farmer through governmental programs that would improve the profitability of his farm if he installs needed conservation measures on his land, and maintains them on a continuing basis. The public benefits to be gained, he reasoned, would justify the cost. The program would

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