

## DER says Scenic River Act no threat to farmers

**BY DICK WANNER**  
**HARRISBURG** - Pennsylvania's Scenic Rivers Act of 1972 has been the focal point of a heated controversy in Western Pennsylvania.

When the state Department of Environmental Resources began public hearings there, a public outcry welled up that may have squelched the planners' hopes for bringing streams into the program.

According to Roger Fickes, a DER Scenic Rivers Program official, the outcries were based more on rumors than fact.

"We maintain that the scenic rivers program is not a threat to local property rights," Fickes said. "It

costs the people nothing, and it doesn't put their land under the control of the state government."

Fickes, whose parents still farm 200 acres in Bedford County, said the western Pennsylvania project was beset by rumors that greatly exaggerated the state's power under the program.

"The act only tells us, DER, to investigate areas for possible scenic river designation. It does not give us the power or the money to buy easements.

"We can not force farmers or other property owners to move.

"I heard one rumor that we were going to take an eight-mile wide corridor on

both sides of the Slippery Rock.

"That would be a stretch of land 16 miles wide along the length of the stream. There's no way we could do anything like that," he said.

Since 1972, only one river has been declared officially scenic, Fickes said. It's a 90-mile stretch of the Schuylkill River, from Port Clinton to Fairmount Dam.

Only the legislature can create a scenic river area, Fickes said.

DER can find suitable bodies of water, and arrange hearings, but the full state assembly must enact a separate law for each river in the program.

DER's role, Fickes said, is

mostly advisory.

"We can advise people what to do with properties in scenic river areas," he said.

"Our goal is to help local governments and local property owners preserve their scenic waterways. The things we say are the same things zoning boards, planning commission and the Soil Conservation Service have been saying for decades."

In some cases, he said, DER recommendations might call for a 50-foot corridor along a riverbank to be kept free of construction or crops. In other cases, they might recommend as much as an eighth-of-a-mile corridor.

Berks County landowners along French Creek, had a change at a hearing on Thursday night to find out more about scenic rivers.

On Tuesday, Chester County property owners get their chance at a 7:30 p.m. meeting set for the Owen J. Roberts Middle School.

"We've been getting wonderful, enthusiastic support from the French Creek people," Fickes said. "It's a complete about-face from what we're experiencing in Western Pennsylvania."

French Creek is one of three streams now under active consideration for the scenic rivers program, Fickes said. The other two are Stony Creek, a wild river just north of Harrisburg, and a section of the Lehigh River

flowing through Carbon and Luzerne Counties.

After the law was passed, DER drew up a list of possible streams which might possibly be included in the program, Fickes said.

One of those streams was the Conestoga River, which flows through miles and miles of Lancaster County farmland.

"Our scenic rivers task force has been approached about studying the Conestoga," he noted. "The Conestoga Valley Association has been lobbying us for years to start the scenic rivers machinery rolling.

"But we've never done it. Maybe someday we will try to have it brought into the program, but right now it's just too dirty to be declared scenic. It has too much silt."

## Food processing adds \$2 billion to economy

**STATE COLLEGE** - Pennsylvania food processing firms rank second in the Northeast in the dollar value added to farm products by manufacturing, according to economist Milton C. Halberg of Penn State. He said this added value is two billion dollars in the Commonwealth.

Although several food manufacturers in the Commonwealth are smaller than the national average, those dealing with grain mill products grew five-fold during the period 1954 to 1972, Halberg said. He noted

companies preserving fruits and vegetables more than tripled in size during the same period.

The growth rate of firms in these two Pennsylvania industries far exceeded that of the average company in the same business elsewhere, it was pointed out.

Leading all the northeastern states in dollar value added to farm food products by manufacturing was New York, with New Jersey third, Maryland a distant fourth, and Massachusetts fifth.

As in other states, the

number of food processing firms in Pennsylvania declined sharply from 1961 to 1975. The findings came from a study of food manufacturing trends as carried out by Hallberg, R.M. Seeley, and James W. Dunn.

As might be expected, regions of Pennsylvania with the highest population led in food manufacturing—Philadelphia, Allentown and Bethlehem, Scranton and Wilkes-Barre, Harrisburg, Lancaster, York, and Pittsburgh.

The study showed Pennsylvania dairy processing

firms appear to be as efficient as dairy plants in other states.

Hallberg commented that the dollar value added per worker in the dairy industry increased 77 per cent nationwide from 1954 to 1972. He said Pennsylvania dairy plants have matched this rate of efficiency.

The report mentioned the somewhat smaller size of food processing firms in the Commonwealth, compared with companies in other states. Chief among the smaller firms are those dealing with meats, grain and bakery products, and beverages.

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