

# What's happening to Rural Clean Water?

**BY SHEILA MILLER**  
**HARRISBURG** — Farmers living in the Conestoga Creek watershed in Lancaster County, along with their neighboring farmers in the Tulpehocken Creek watershed in Berks County, may be in for some additional funds from the U.S. government.  
 As a result of applications submitted by the Soil and Water Conservation Districts in each county, these two watersheds are in the running for a slice of \$50

million appropriated by Congress for conservation work to improve water quality.

According to Walter Peechatca, director of the State Conservation Commission, the \$50 million has been set up as a nationwide sum and will have to be split up among 50 states. He added that all administrative costs for the Rural Clean Water Program, also referred to as the 208 program, will come

off the top, with about \$40 million being left for actual conservation measures.

The 208 program has not emerged without controversy, which has caused a delay, not only in its getting off the ground, but also in budgeting funds for the U.S. Department of Agriculture agencies.

Originally, the bill that set up the program called for 208 to be administered through the Soil Conservation Service. SCS was to provide the

technical and financial roles in assisting farmers to improve their water quality.

Last Fall, a turn-about occurred which gave the financial responsibility to SCS's sister agency, the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service. ASCS currently handles the financial end of the Agricultural Conservation Program.

In the interim between these changes, SCS had accepted a number of county applications. These were sent down the road to Washington, D.C. for consideration and approval. Even though the agency running the funds has changed, those original applications are still valid.

Dick Penet, the state director for ASCS, told *Lancaster Farming*, the price tag on the Conestoga Creek watershed amounted to \$16 million. Considering that this application was one of sixty-four in the nation, and represents a quarter of the total funds, Penet said he felt its chances of being funded in full were small.

He mentioned a sub-basin of the Conestoga might stand a better chance for funding this year. This sub-basin, Indian Run, was submitted with a dollar figure of \$1.9 million.

The Berks County application also has a high cost estimate, equalling \$14 million total, with an ASCS cost of \$9 million.

Penet explained ASCS funds approximately 65 percent of the cost of conservation practices on the average. He pointed out that in order to get over 50 percent cost-share funding, it will require ASC national approval.

Where did the project price tags come from? Penet

pointed out a local committee surveyed the conservation needs of the watersheds and projected the costs. The committee called on the expert advice of private industry, other agencies, planning commissions, township supervisors, and farm organizations.

Penet remarked if one of the project applications in Pennsylvania is funded, he considers it fortunate. He noted that his agency will concentrate on the project area, and if needed, a shift in personnel would be carried out to get the project completed. Penet also called for a total commitment by all

agencies cooperating in the 208 program.

The national coordinating committee is scheduled to meet this month to review and approve this year's projects. The final regulation for the program will only come out on January 24. Penet said the proposed regulations were printed in the Federal Register on December 21 of last year, but a 30 day public review is required before they can be final.

The 208 program appears to be making some headway, but it still is a long way from being organized and ready to go for farmers in southeastern Pa.

## Two conservationists join Dauphin Co. SCS

**HARRISBURG** — The Harrisburg Field Office of the Soil Conservation Service has recently welcomed additional personnel to serve the conservation needs of Dauphin County. Sand Swank, an SCS Conservation Technician and Laurie Williams, a Soil Conservationist under the Dauphin County CETA Program, will be assisting Joel Myers, District Conservationist.

Sand Swank, a native of Danville, served as a student trainee in Mercer County and as a conservation aid in York County.

A graduate of Danville High School in 1973, he attended Penn State at University Park for 1½ years. He is now attending a PSU branch campus part time in order to obtain a degree in General Agriculture.

Sande and his wife Marilyn will be locating in the Colonial Park area in the near future.

Laurie Williams of Picketown, recently joined the SCS staff as a Soil Con-



Sand Swank, left, and Laurie Williams, center, have recently joined the SCS staff in Dauphin Co. They will be working under the direction of Joel Myers, right.

servationist with the C.E.T.A. program. She will be assisting in Dauphin County and the northern reaches of Dauphin County. She has also worked as a counselor for juvenile delinquents.

Laurie graduated from Wilson College in 1975 with majors in biology and psychology. For two years she was a professional Girl

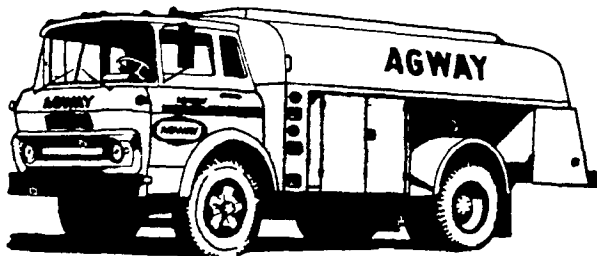
Scout serving the Colonial Park area as well as Perry County and the northern reaches of Dauphin County.

Laurie is looking forward to a future in the field of conservation.

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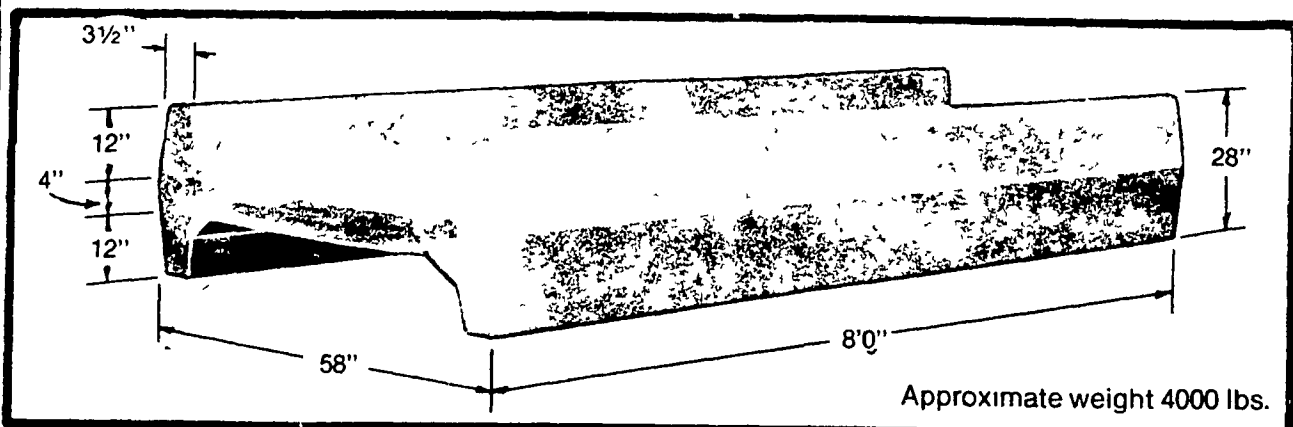
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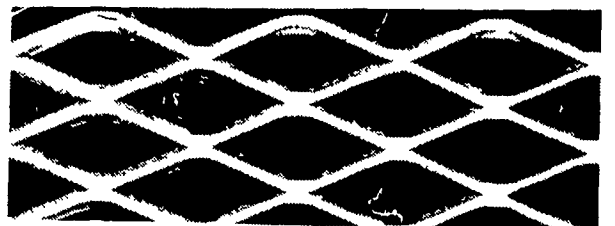
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