

New CRD agent comes to Capital region

HARRISBURG — Many farmers in southeastern Pennsylvania will be glad to know Richard Fox, the new Capital Region Community Resource Development Agent.

Just one month into his new position, Fox will be busy working to help get

local governments interested in preserving agriculture land.

How will he be able to do this tremendous task? Fox stated he will be holding workshops with interested township officials and planning commissions. These informational



Richard Fox is the Capital regions new Community Resource Development agent.

programs will be designed to help them understand their land use planning alternatives, he said.

Fox does not come to his new job without practical experience in his field. In 1978, he was employed under the CETA program in Dauphin and Cumberland Counties as their planning assistant.

Still working on his Masters Degree in environmental planning from Shippensburg State College, Fox was a graduate of the

college's geoenvironmental studies program in 1977

Writing his thesis, he said, has been somewhat delayed because he stepped into the Extension position in May that had been left vacant for about three years.

As the region's C.R.D. agent, Fox said he will be covering eight counties: Franklin, Adams, York, Lancaster, Perry, Cumberland, Dauphin, and Lebanon.

Tops on his list of priorities established by Extension is to help work on land use comprehensive planning in the region. He noted preserving agricultural land is one of the top priorities not only in the Capital region but throughout the state.

Fox said he has been following the events in Lancaster County's attempts to preserve its best farmland.

"The Lancaster movement is stronger probably because the problem is more crucial. Its hand has been forced, and it's come to the point where Lancaster Countians have to do something. In other counties, it's still just a lot of talk.

"The deed restriction idea should work because it is a voluntary program with permanent results. Other alternatives, like zoning, aren't so voluntary and they

might inhibit people from cooperating.

"Time will tell—even if it doesn't work, at least Lancaster's trying. It's setting an example other counties might follow."

Fox said that his work will not be promoting one type of technique, but he will be showing local townships and municipalities their options.

"The first thing local government should do is see how the people living there feel about land use planning and farmland preservation. If you don't have the public support, you're just wasting your time and energy.

"The next step will involve looking at the comprehensive plan for the community, and identifying where the good farmland is located.

"We have to recognize that we can't save all the farmland, because of the demand for housing, but we can save the best."

Fox pointed out that farmers with specific problems can call on him for advice.

He cited the recent case of Lebanon County's Kenneth Grumbine (Lancaster Farming May 17 issue) as an example of what's to come.

"In many cases, farmers get disgusted with pressure from residential areas moving next to them. They

say they can't farm there anymore, so they're driven out. They get fed up with the incompatible land uses, with the litter and the mini-bike traffic through their fields."

Fox said he will be trying to help municipalities where farming is important to keep away from passing ordinances that would restrict the farm operations.

"Local officials can easily pass something, and the farmers living in the area that will be affected by the ordinance are unaware of what's happening. They need to get involved in their local government action."

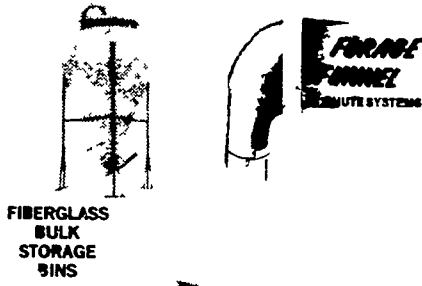
Fox said he can almost read the hand writing on the wall. When he was employed by Dauphin and Cumberland Counties two years ago, he didn't see many news articles about problems between farmers and residential areas. Now, he said, he sees them in different papers almost every week.

Fox said he is ready to help. He plans to get to work on a newsletter directed to local officials, making them aware of his assistance.

If anyone is having a problem with land use and would like some assistance, Fox said he can be contacted at the Dauphin County Extension office, 717/652-8460.—SM

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Congressman asks cut in farm interest rates

WASHINGTON, D.C. — U.S. Congressman Tom Harkin of Iowa has called on U.S. Agriculture Secretary Bob Bergland to immediately reduce interest rates charged to financially troubled farmers under the Economic Emergency Assistance loan program from 14 per cent to 10 per cent.

Harkin said EEA loans are supposed to carry an interest rate based on the cost of money to the government. He noted the Administration promptly raised EEA loan interest rates from 11 per cent to 14 per cent when government money costs began to rise in March.

However, Harkins said,

the Farmers Home Administration is still charging 14 per cent for the emergency loans, despite the fact that government money costs have dropped well below that level.

In April, the average cost of money to the government was 12.4 per cent. In May, the cost has dropped to just 9.23 per cent.

Harkin said the Administration's "foot-dragging is unexplainable, unconscionable, and intolerable."

"I find it very disturbing that the Department would be so quick to increase interest rates and to be so slow in reducing them," Harkin said in a letter to Bergland.

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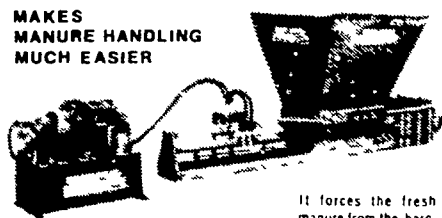


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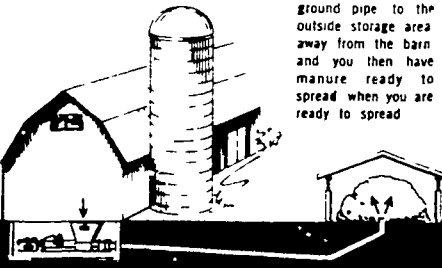
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