

Hearings on storm water will affect ag community

HARRISBURG — If you noticed in last week's **Lancaster Farming**, A15 the Department of Environmental Resources has scheduled two public hearings on storm water management.

Are these hearings important enough for farmers to take time out of their busy schedules to attend?

According to Khervin Smith, chief of Advisory Services Section in the Division of Storm Water Management, these hearings are important for any person residing in the Commonwealth.

What the hearings are designed to do, he said, is to take down public comment on what the state has proposed in the line of storm water management watersheds.

Smith explained that Act 167, the Storm Water Management Act of 1978, required DER to define the

state's watershed areas in order to assist counties in developing a management plan.

Now that their task is accomplished, dividing the state into 386 watershed areas, DER is asking the public if they are happy with the divisions and if there are any changes needed.

How do you know where the state has drawn the line in defining the watershed areas? Smith explained his department has provided maps of the areas to each county. They should be available at the county commissioners' offices, county planning commission offices, and local conservation district offices.

Will Act 167 affect the farming community? According to Smith, the storm water policies of the state include agriculture. However he pointed out that if a farmer is following good conservation practices and erosion and sedimentation

control, the present conservation plan should suffice.

Once the watershed designations are adopted by the counties, the processes for setting the criteria and standards for storm water runoff control in the watershed will be set in motion.

Smith noted the legislation does not provide for any financial assistance to local farmers in implementing storm water management practice. "It provides financial bookkeeping reimbursement to the counties only."

The two hearings are scheduled for June 24 and 26, with the locations strategically set in DuBois and Reading, respectively.

Smith said the locations were picked in areas where there hasn't been much input into the watershed designations.

"We expect the DuBois

meeting to take care of those people in the western part of the state, although either hearing is open to anyone.

"We chose Reading for the other hearing because in the Southeast we've heard from almost everyone but Berks County. It will give them more opportunity to comment when the hearing is in their county."

The hearings, Smith added, are an input procedure to provide people with the opportunity to comment on "what they want to see as far as storm water management is concerned." It will help

them in identifying what needs to be considered when developing land use plans.

Smith explained the comments made at the public hearings will be given to the Environmental Quality Board on July 15 for any recommended changes in the DER watershed index.

"If a county looks at the watershed map and finds the DER divisions are not useful, there is a possibility the index for that county might be thrown out. We'll certainly discuss the situation. And if the recommended changes are

reasonable, they will probably be made.

The hearings will be held on Penn State community campuses in both DuBois and Reading. On both June 24 and 26, the sessions will feature an afternoon and evening meeting beginning at 1 p.m. and 7 p.m.

For more information or to provide public comment prior to the meeting, contact Gilbert E. Kyle, director, DER Bureau of Dams and Waterway Management, Box 2357, Harrisburg, PA 17120, telephone 717/783-1384. —SM

This Sunday is Md. farm visitation day

ANNAPOLIS Md — Maryland's annual Farm Visitation Day this year will be run on two dates for the first time in its fourteen-year history.

The traditional early-summer date is Sunday, June 22 at 17 participating farms in nine counties. Three farms in western Maryland's Washington county will be involved in an early-fall Farm Visitation Day on the first Sunday in September, Sept. 7.

Open house hours on both days will run from 1 to 5 p.m. Many of the host farms will offer light refreshments, with cold milk a likely prospect at participating dairy farms.

Intended to give urban families a close look at their farm neighbors, Farm Visitation Day is sponsored each year by the University of Maryland's Cooperative Extension Service in cooperation with all major farm organizations

Locations for this Sunday's Farm Visitation Day are scattered from the mountain foothills of Frederick county to the flatlands of the Eastern Shore.

Directions and descriptions of all participating farms are listed in a free Farm Visitation Day brochure, titled "A Family Affair" (Leaflet 86).

The leaflet is available from offices of the Extension Service and from public

libraries in the participating counties — Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Calvert, Charles, Frederick, Harford, Howard, Montgomery and Queen Annes.

Additional information is available from the office of Roy Porter, extension coordinator of special communications at the University of Maryland in College Park His telephone number, during weekday office hours, is 301/454-3712 or 454-4064.



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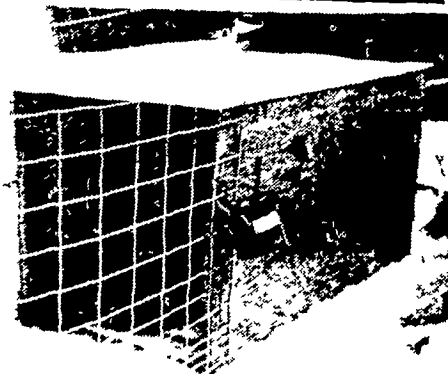
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