

State farmland loses over 31 million tons of soil annually

HARRISBURG — Farmland in Pennsylvania is losing soil at a rate over 31 million tons each year, according to a new USDA Soil Conservation Service report. This averages 5½ tons annually for each acre tilled in the Keystone state.

Surprisingly, according to the report, about 70 percent of the erosion occurs on gently to moderately sloping land, rather than on steeper land.

The report also points out cropland in Pennsylvania is decreasing by some 52,000 acres each year. Woodland is vanishing at an even greater rate of over 170,000 acres per year. In contrast, the report indicates urban and built-up land increased by over 1 million acres during a ten year period from 1967 to 1977.

This data is contained in a

recently published report, Pennsylvania National Resources Inventory. Natural resource information is available on land use, conservation treatment needs and status, prime farmlands, potential cropland, sheet and rill erosion and wetlands.

Data was collected from 1400 sample land units covering 100 acres each and located randomly in Pennsylvania. Field data was gathered by Soil Conservation Service personnel. The report shows 10-year trends in land use and treatment.

A Natural Resources Inventory was initiated by Congress under the Resources Conservation Act of 1977. The Act is designed to provide for the appraisal of the Nation's soil, water and related resources. The National Resources Inventory will be continuously

updated at five-year intervals.

"The Inventory will provide direction for SCS's current conservation programs and assist in the development of future programs," said Graham T. Munkittrich, State Conservationist. "This in-

formation will be useful in government agencies, planners, and individuals interested in land use planning."

Copies of the report are available from local offices of the Soil Conservation Service.

Electromagnetic detectives to search for ag pests

ATLANTA, Ga. — Scientists at Georgia Tech Research Institute will develop electromagnetic devices for the detection of contraband agricultural products in international travelers' baggage under a research agreement with the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Anson Bertrand, USDA director of science and education, said the project is an effort by USDA's Science and Education Administration to help speed up and improve the inspection process.

Bertrand said several electromagnetic techniques

will be investigated, such as signal transmission and reflection.

In this approach, microwaves can be transmitted through baggage or reflected by items in baggage or handbags. The device would detect fruit, meats and vegetables that may carry disease

organisms or insect pests without agricultural inspectors having to open baggage.

In 1978, 7000 disease carriers were found in foreign agricultural products confiscated at U.S. airports.

Electromagnetic in-

struments would offer more thorough inspection with less delay to international passengers, 25 million of whom arrived in the United States by air in 1979.

The one-year, \$80,075 electromagnetic study is funded by USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service and administered by

USDA's Science and Education Administration.

The principal investigator at Georgia Tech Research Institute is Ronald L. Seaman, and the sponsoring scientist for SEA is Stuart O. Nelson at the Russell Research Center, Athens, Ga.

Government releases study on weather

WASHINGTON, D.C. — A five-year plan to reduce the adverse effect of climatic conditions on the economy and environment has been released by the Commerce

Department's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Prepared by the National Climate Program Office, the plan's goal is to help avert

weather-related problems such as food and fuel shortage through improved forecasting and more efficient dissemination of climatic data.

Funds will be drawn from appropriations 11 of the 17 participating agencies receive for climate-related activities. The proposed 1981 budget is \$126.7 million.

Specific goals of the plan include:

Insuring that industries such as farming, construction, recreation, shipping and fishing receive improved climatic data and use it more effectively;

Assessing the effect of increased carbon dioxide on the climate;

Studying the extent to which solar and earth radiation modify climatic conditions, and

Gathering more data on the oceans' roles in climate formation.

Edward Epstein of NOAA is director of the National Climate Program. Participating in the project are 11 federal departments, the Agency for International Development, Council on Environmental Quality, National Aeronautics and Space Administration, National Science Foundation, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency.



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