

# Md. conservation officials support ag water quality program

HAGERSTOWN, MD — Conservation officials from around the state went on record last week supporting a voluntary agricultural water quality program that provides cost sharing for any non-income producing practice that farmers are required to install to comply with water quality standards.

Maryland Association of Soil Conservation District members took the action at their winter convention, January 6 and 7, in Hagerstown.

They hope it will lay the groundwork for requesting funds to implement Maryland's water quality program which was approved by the Environmental Protection Agency last year but never funded.

They are also asking for free technical help for landowners to design and install pollution control

measures.

About 200 officials of the state's 24 soil conservation districts, U.S. Soil Conservation Service, Extension Service and other agencies attended. The conservationists reviewed program progress, discussed new developments, and formulated positions on conservation issues.

Alan Bandel, University of Maryland, and Robert Semler, City of Hagerstown, addressed the group on the advantages and drawbacks of spreading municipal sludge on farmland. Semler said the city hauls 25 truckloads of sludge per day to farms within a five mile radius. Farms are selected based on their proximity to streams and flood plains and the amount of rock outcropping. The sludge and soil are closely analyzed and monitored to prevent harmful chemical buildups and

groundwater and runoff pollution.

Bandel said the main concern about using municipal sludge is that, unlike livestock manure, it contains an unknown amount of heavy metals and harmful chemicals that can only be determined through extensive testing. He said

that research on sludge utilization was in an infancy stage and that research is needed on ways to remove heavy metals from sludge or prevent them from entering the waste system

At the business session on Wednesday, Lyle Bauer, president of the National

Association of Conservation Districts, urged the group to be more aggressive in seeking funds for increased program responsibilities. He also said that NACD supports a stronger role for local conservation districts in the nation's conservation program.

In other actions, MASCD members voted to

—support agricultural land preservation programs at the state and county level;

—appoint a committee to review the definition of ponds and construction requirements;

—oppose any cross compliance requirements in the conservation program;

—support changes in the Maryland Off-Road Vehicle Law designating snowmobiles as off-road vehicles and deleting the exception that allows off-road vehicles to travel on clearly marked private driveways without permission; and

—commend the Carroll Soil Conservation District on its accomplishments in improving water quality under the experimental Rural Clean Water Program.

## Berks conservation to check land use

LEESPORT — The Berks County Conservation District may be looking into the county's non-point pollution potential during the coming year according to Mary Ann Rimby, Chairman of the District

The District has applied to the Bureau of Soil and Water Conservation, DER, for funds made available from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency grant for

studies provided for in the Federal Clean Water Act.

Plans are being made to collect land use information in selected drainage areas of the Perkiomen and Northkill Watersheds.

They will be looking at the kind of land use, farming practices, closeness to streams and the water quality to be protected. The intensive and spot sampling will help determine the conservation needs of the land in the watershed.


Future District programs will be founded upon the results of the study

Non-point pollution is described as any harmful substance from the land surface that enters the stream at various places rather than from a drainage ditch, pipe or other specific point

## Ag committee rep sworn in



Rep. and Mrs. Noah Wenger pose on the floor of the House of Representatives at elaborate swearing-in ceremonies last week. Wenger begins his third term as representative for Lancaster County. He has been reappointed as vice-chairman of the Agriculture committee and will also serve on the local government, transportation and conservation committees.



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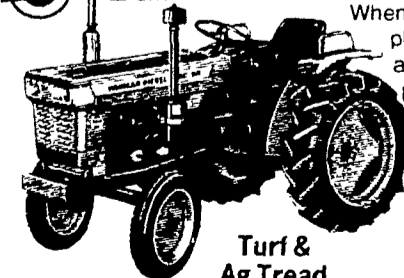
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