

Farmers fighting to hold soil on the Great Plains

WASHINGTON, D C — This time of year, farmers watch the sky closer than usual on the Great Plains of Colorado, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas and Wyoming.

They're looking for signs high winds might kick up.

In the winter months and on through May, the strong winds do their worst to the land, sweeping tons of topsoil away. It's sometimes called the big blow season, a time when a replay of the killing Dust Bowl of the mid-1930's is most likely to happen—if it ever does.

There's reason to believe it won't.

Many farmers and agencies of the U S Department of Agriculture are trying to prevent it.

A special team effort of farmers and the USDA's Soil Conservation Service is called the Great Plains Conservation Program. USDA records show their achievements are considerable, but they know they have to do more.

People still remember how swiftly the country's first national dust storm turned the Great Plains countryside into a Dust Bowl nearly 50 years ago. The catastrophe caught the victims by surprise, although a lack of adequate conservation practices had been laying the groundwork for trouble a long time.

Huge clouds darkened by Great Plains topsoils headed east. Sparse rainfall in parts of Texas scarcely slowed the soil's flight to the Atlantic Ocean, 2000 miles away. Millions of acres of land were stripped of plant nutrients. Farm

families by the thousands packed what belongings they could salvage and left the Great Plains.

"The Dust Bowl need not be repeated," said Norman Berg, chief of the USDA's Soil Conservation Service. "With modern conservation methods and advanced agricultural technology, farmers can put up a better fight."

Berg said the Great Plains Conservation Program specifically aims to restore land damaged by the dust storms of the 1930's and to prevent a return of the Dust Bowl.

Under this program, Berg said, 469 counties in the Great Plains states voluntarily practice ex-

tensive soil and water conservation. They get financial help from the USDA, and local units of the Soil Conservation Service provide on-the-spot know-how.

Another 49 counties soon will be eligible for the assistance, Berg said. To qualify for the help, a county must be designated by the secretary of agriculture as susceptible to serious wind erosion.

Farmers taking part in the soil-saving effort work with specialists of the USDA agency. They develop conservation plans to meet the needs of each farm and move ahead with the government paying part of the costs. The federal share

of the expenses for each conservation practice ranges from 50 to 80 percent. The landowners pay the rest.

President Eisenhower signed the program into law in 1956. In 1980, Congress extended the program to September 30, 1981, and authorized \$600 million in overall cost-sharing funds. Altogether, cost-share payments cannot exceed \$50 million for any program year.

This program, said Berg, is coordinated with other federal, state and local governmental agencies through state and county committees. It's intended to be in

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Adams Holstein Club sets meeting plans

GETTYSBURG — "The Adams County Holstein Association has made its 1981 membership goal of 125 members", according to Marvin Brown, State Director for the club in his report to the Board of Directors at their meeting last Saturday at the home of Mr and Mrs. John Hess, R5, Gettysburg.

President Adam Lobaugh presided at the meeting. He read a letter of appreciation from the Gettysburg Area Chamber of Commerce, acknowledging participation in the Community Night on Gettysburg College Campus, January 31.

He appointed Larry Mummert to head a committee to prepare a new exhibit for future use.

Marvin Brown was named to recruit a delegate to attend a planning meeting for the 1981 South Central Championship Show, held Friday at Carlisle.

The Board agreed to support the Adams County Fruitgrowers in their effort to expand the Apple

Blossom Festival to Saturday and Sunday May 2 and 3, at South Mountain Fairgrounds.

County Agent Thomas E. Piper read a letter from Kenneth Wisner, Extension Agent, Frederick County, Maryland, outlining a possible dairy tour. A committee headed by John Hess will visit these farms on March 11, to organize the tour for July 30.

The Dairy Princess pageant set for Saturday, June 13, at Biglerville High School will be organized by Dawn Bodenber, Doris Wilkinson and Cindy Zepp.

A two-night meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, July 14, at a place to be determined.

President Lobaugh announced that dairyman Harold King is rebuilding a barn destroyed by fire. He called for volunteers to assist in placing the rafters.

Plans were advanced for the York-Adams Calferama Sale to be held Tuesday, March 17, 7:30 p.m. at Avalong Farms, York.

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