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Legislative Roundup

House Ag Committee says
"Milk's the one"

HARRISBURG — Personal satisfaction must have swept through Joseph V. Grieco's mind on Monday when House Bill 1351, which designates milk as the official beverage of Pennsylvania, was unanimously and favorably voted out of the House Agriculture Committee.

Grieco, the Ag Committee chairman, introduced the bill, according to his office staff, after a discussion with three 4-H'ers from his 84th District (Lycoming, Northumberland-parts) who were touring the legislative halls in Harrisburg during 4-H Capital Days.

At their suggestion, Grieco checked with the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture to see whether there was a state beverage. Finding none, Grieco drafted and sponsored the legislation proposing milk as the state beverage.

The bill is on the House agenda and should be voted on sometime in June.

Also voted favorably out of the House Ag Committee was Senate Bill 512, which amends the Pennsylvania Harness Racing Law. It too is on the House Calendar for its second reading and should be voted on next month.

A new introduction to the House

of Representative is House Bill 1429. This legislation, introduced on May 12, will identify multiflora rose as a noxious weed.

HB 1429 was sponsored by Representative Samuel D. Hayes, Jr., a republican for the 81st District (parts of Blair, Centre, and Huntingdon) and House Majority Leader.

House Bill 1429 will provide the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture with a way to establish weed control areas, make recommendations for control and destruction of noxious weeds, and help bring about the destruction of harmful weeds. The bill has gone to the Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee.

"The multiflora rose, once planted as a cover crop for game and as hedgerows for fencing, has become a serious problem for many Pennsylvania farmers," Hayes stated. "House Bill 1429 will help the agricultural community control or destroy the multiflora rose and other noxious weeds."

This legislation has the backing

of both the Grange and Pennsylvania Farmers' Association.

Senate Bill 161, introduced by Senator Clarence F. Manbeck (R-48th District) was passed by the Senate on May 5 with a vote of 48-0. This legislation, which deals primarily on transportation, was passed with an important amendment.

According to Linda Boyer of the State Grange, the farm organization has been working on this bill because the amendment allows for transportation of "implements of husbandry between farms with just a slow moving vehicle sign during daylight hours." She noted the present law requires lights.

She explained this legislative action resulted from a recent incident in which a Granger was arrested for failure to have lights on the back of his farm vehicle during daylight hours.

Since its unanimous acceptance by the Senate, the bill has moved to the House Transportation Committee.

these counties are being redesignated as metropolitan as people move out from the cities and commute.

The problem is that some of these counties that technically qualify as metropolitan actually have thousands of people still living in completely rural areas and small towns.

At the same time, the population count may be inflating the number of people living in truly rural areas. Some suburban counties that are fast absorbing the urban overflow don't yet qualify as metropolitan.

So what appears to be rural population growth is, in reality, urban expansion. In addition, the definition of metropolitan areas is being broadened, so some people now shown to be living in rural areas will soon be officially considered urban dwellers.

These subtleties of classification become significant when program funds are passed out. Census data help state and federal agencies distribute billions of dollars in benefits to 39,000 local jurisdictions. The growth in rural areas should bring them more seats in Congress, more money for health care and housing, and community development programs, and extended credit from federal lending sources.

But population figures can't tell the whole story about an area's needs. A growing suburban county that is beginning to experience the problems of the city—heightened unemployment, congestion, drug and alcohol abuse, need for expanded services—may still be ineligible for the benefits a city receives because it is officially regarded as rural.

In areas of metropolitan expansion, priorities can conflict, as when the newer residents call for more spending on schools or on roads to meet their commuting needs, expenses that the older residents may not think justifiable.

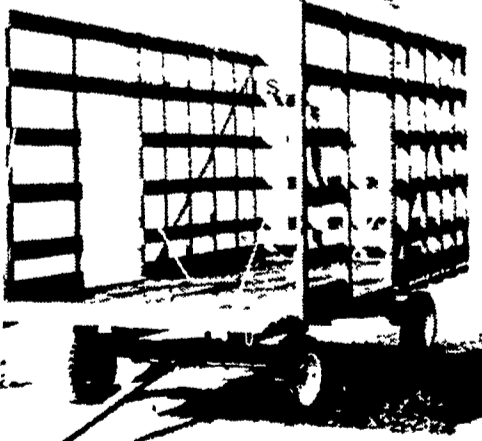
The other side of the problem can occur when a county is shown to have a low population density, and funds are allocated on that basis. But the services deemed adequate for the area may not take into account the distance people have to travel to obtain those services. In this case, the locality's specific needs are not met.

These problems aren't being ignored. A study of rural community facilities, in which USDA is participating, is one attempt to find better guidelines for awarding federal funds and credit. The study should help pinpoint which services are needed by and available to rural areas.



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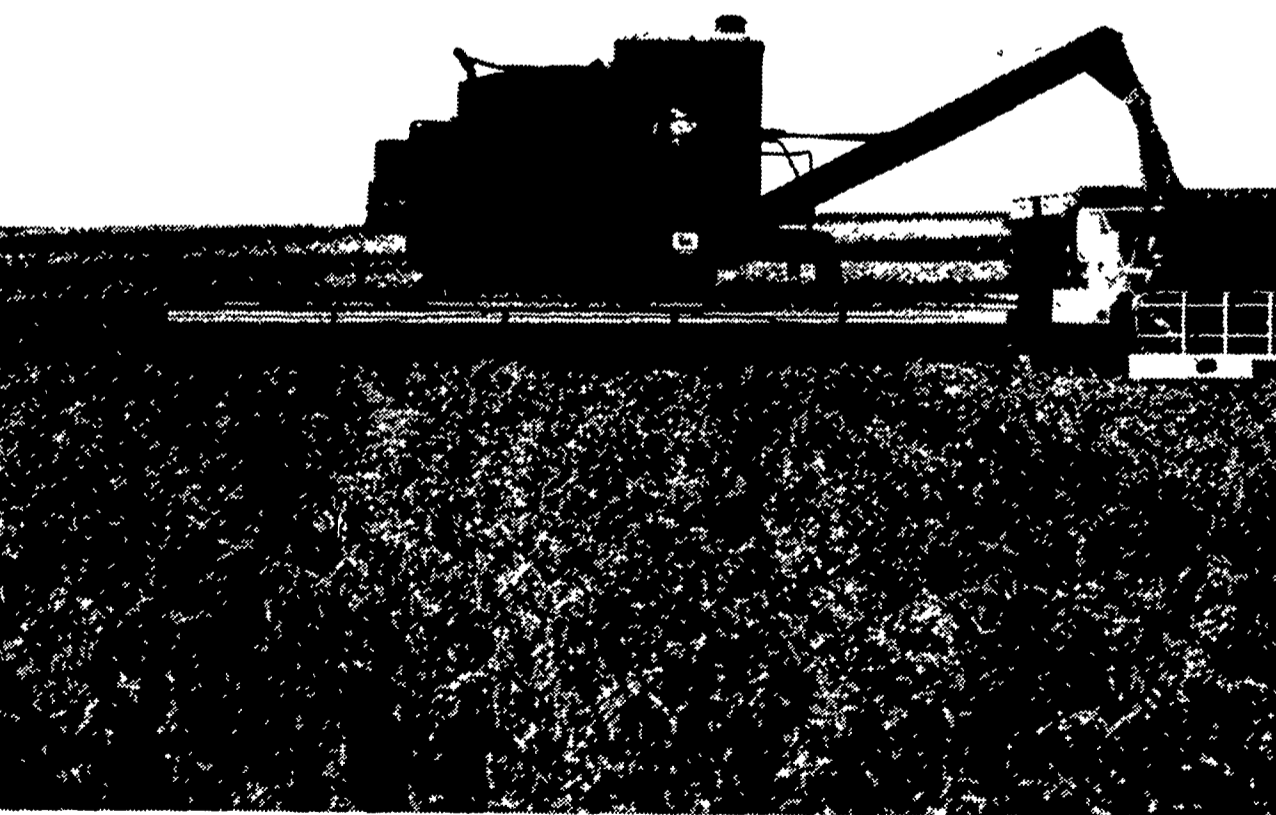


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