

# Md. districts set water policies

COLLEGE PARK, Md. — If the state and public wants clean water and storm water runoff control,

they're going to have to come up with the money to fund the programs. That is the gist of a

resolution passed by representatives of Maryland's 24 soil conservation districts at their summer meeting in Ocean city last week.

Attending were over 300 people

from districts and other agencies including the U.S. Soil Conservation Service, Extension Service, Dept. of Health and Mental Hygiene, Maryland State Department of Agriculture, and Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service.

The effect of inflation and tight budgets on federal and local soil and water conservation programs was a recurring theme throughout the three-day convention of the Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts. District supervisors, who are volunteers, are worried about accepting additional responsibility from the state and federal level without the necessary funding to go along with it.

The districts, which receive funding from the state and counties and technical support from the U.S. Soil Conservation Service, started out in the 1930s helping farmers to control erosion and conserve water. In recent years, they've been given responsibility for the state's urban sediment control, storm water management, and agricultural water quality management programs.

In the resolution passed Friday, they called on state officials to come up with more money "if it is agreed that (these programs) are of sufficient priority to the state at this time of declining resources."

In a related action, MASCD members asked their executive

committee to work with the state legislature to reintroduce a bill which would allow the state to establish a program to share with landowners the cost of installing best management practices to improve water quality.

Under the state's agricultural water quality management program, districts are encouraging landowners in critical areas to voluntarily install conservation practices to keep sediment and animal wastes out of streams. However, animal waste control measures in particular can cost from \$20,000 to \$80,000. As one supervisor commented, "If the public wants clean water, they should help pay for it."

In resource committee meetings, MASCD members discussed issues of common concern including the benefits of no-till farming, gypsy moth infestations in northern Maryland, plant materials program, Acres for Wildlife program, revision of the state's pond regulations, use of infra-red photography for surveys, options for rural sewage disposal, and the Turner's Creek Conservation Park in Kent county.

Alan Musselman, staff member for the state's agricultural land preservation program, appeared before members to ask their support. So far, he said, 40,000 acres have been signed up under preservation districts and easements have been acquired on 78,000 acres.

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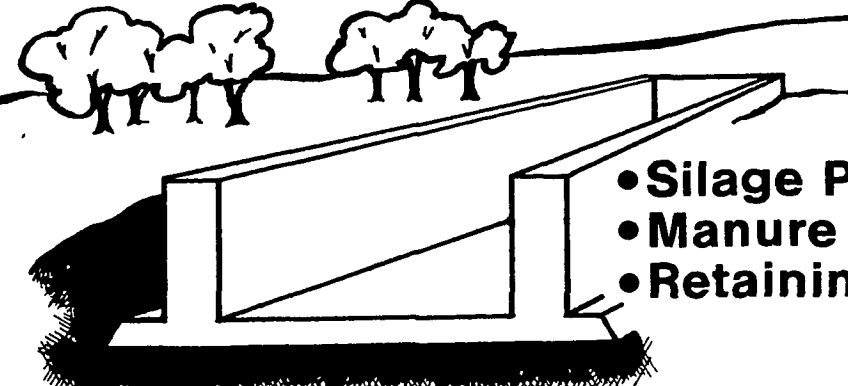
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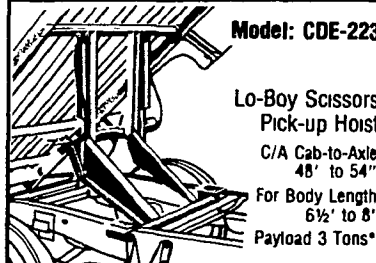
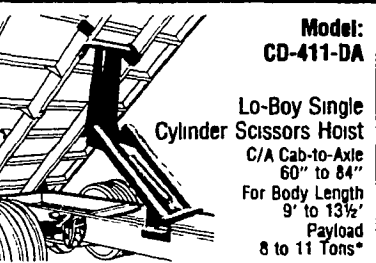
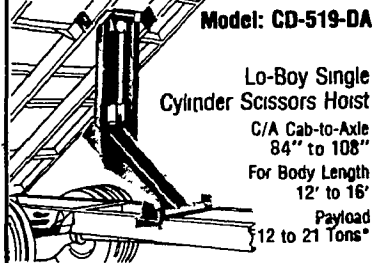
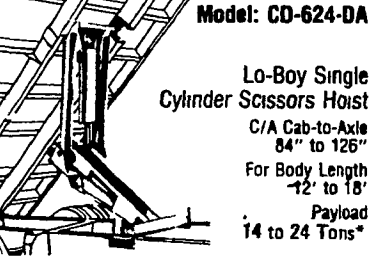
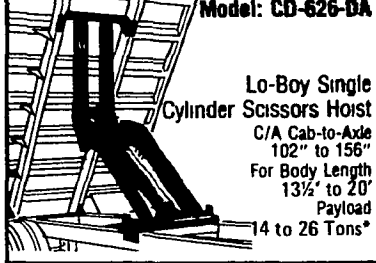
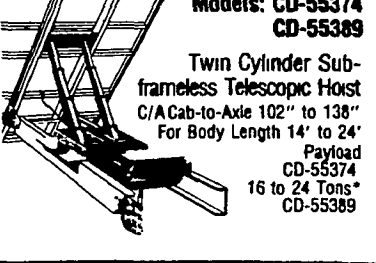
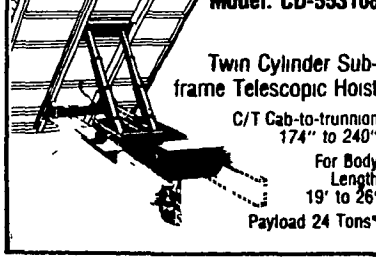
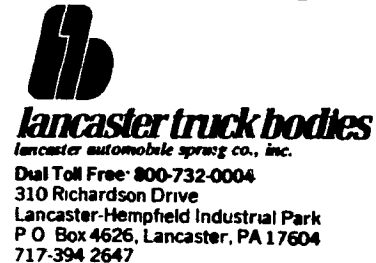
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