

Conservation field day sparks interest at Md. farm

COLLEGE PARK, Md. — Loudspeakers blared country music over the roar of farm machinery while about 300 spectators roamed around Everett Moser's farm in Frederick County, Md., last Friday watching conservation practices being installed.

The occasion was a conservation field day, sponsored by the soil conservation districts in Frederick and Montgomery counties, the U.S. Soil Conservation Service, Extension Service, and Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service.

It was strategically timed, say sponsors, to give area farmers a chance to see what conservation practices are and what they can do before planting time. By the end of the day, the practices that were installed will decrease the annual rate of erosion from over 20 tons per acre to less than 4 tons.

Harry Fouche, a young, red-haired farmer, said he was planning to install a diversion terrace on a farm he's renting. He admitted he waited for the field day so he could see how it was done.

"It's really good to do these things (conservation practices)," Fouche said. "I used to do a lot of custom work and some of them (crop fields) needed it but didn't have it. We have to save our soil for the future."

Like most farm events, there was a feeling of fellowship and camaraderie at the conservation field day. People who came to watch stayed to help out, reported Catherine Gugulis, SCS information officer.

Randy and Phillip Sowers, who operate the host farm, were on hand with equipment and labor. Equipment dealers and other

commercial firms donated machines, supplies, and food. A new quadtractor, which looked like an elevated dunebuggy, drew as much attention as a 1948 diversion plow renovated by high school FFA students.

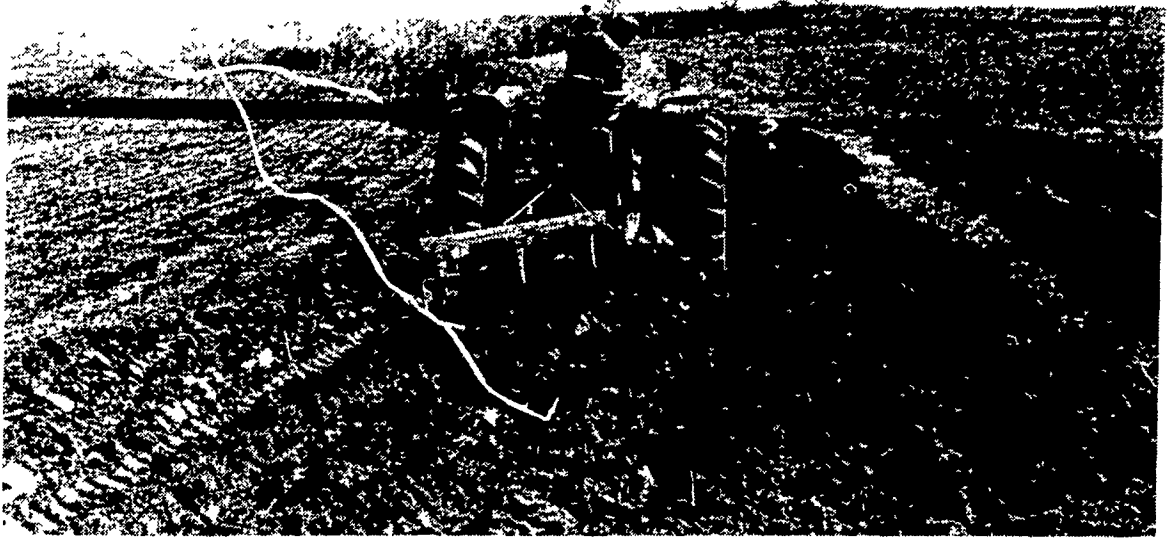
Volunteers on tractors with plows hitched behind snaked around hillsides, pushing up mounds of earth and shaping them into small ridges to form diversion terraces. These shallow channels will intercept runoff and dispense it into a pasture below. The outlet was ripped with rock to prevent erosion where the water exits.

"When I was 9 years old," said Fred Beachley, one of the tractor operators, "the soil conservation people laid out diversion terraces on my daddy's farm. They put those in with bulldozers. Putting them in with tractors is a lot cheaper."

According to Owen Unangst, SCS district conservationist, the cost of plowing in diversions is about 25 cents per foot compared to \$2 per foot for bulldozing them in. Another obvious advantage is that landowners can install these diversions themselves once they have the contour lines. SCS technicians will lay out the contour line and supervise construction to make sure that the grade is correct, Unangst said.

In another corner of the field, machines dug a trench for drainage tile in a low, wet area. A nearby spring was tapped and the water fed into a new livestock watering trough. As a result, this once practically useless area can be used as pasture. The trough will provide the cows with a clean, safe water supply. It will also keep them from polluting a nearby

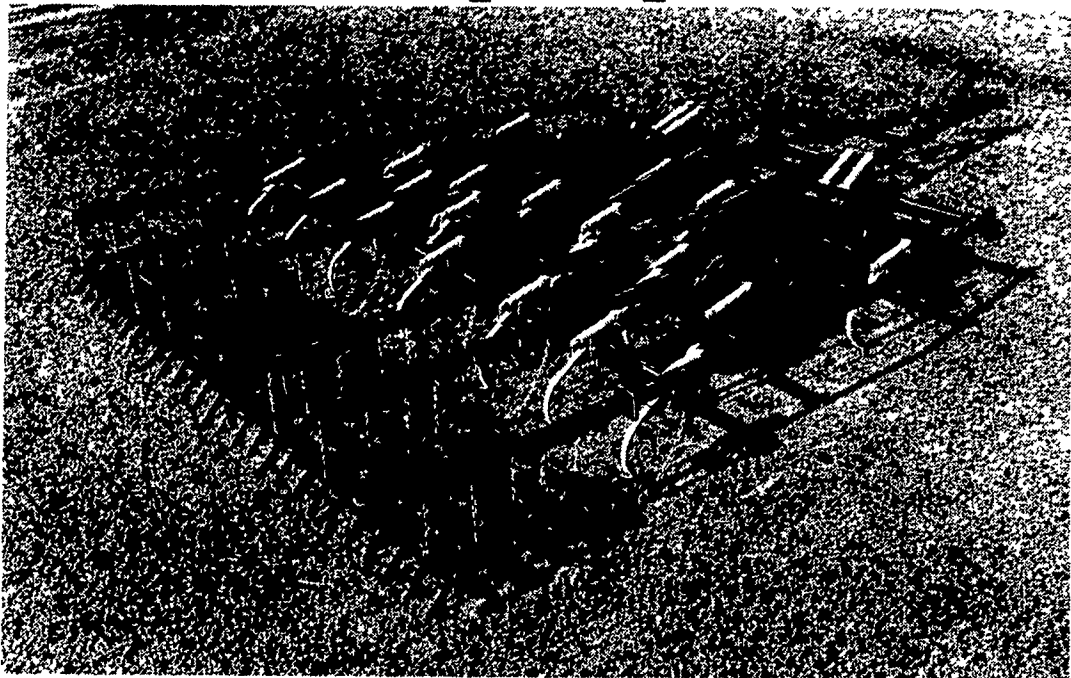
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Fred Beachley, supervisor for the Catocin, Moser farm last Friday. Conservation officials Md. Soil Conservation District, helps plow in one of the "island" diversion terraces installed at a conservation field day on the Everett Moser farm last Friday. Conservation officials were demonstrating a number of cost-effective conservation practices to encourage local farmers to install them before spring planting.



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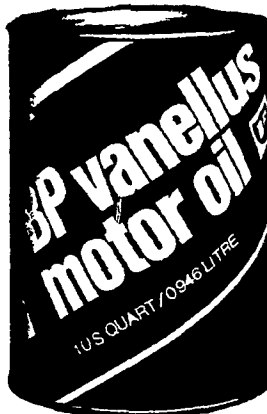
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