

## Cut soil losses

# Soil loss costs \$18 billion annually

HARRISBURG - Soil losses in the United States amount to a staggering \$18 billion each year reports State Conservationist Graham T. Munkittrick of the USDA Soil Conservation Service.

"Water from rainfall and snowmelt alone causes an estimated loss of 3 billion tons of soil each year," he says. "Pennsylvania suffers 70 million tons of soil erosion annually.

"This high level of soil erosion causes lost food and fiber production. Streams, lakes and reservoirs fill up faster with sediment, or just plain mud," he adds.

One government study shows soil loss causes an additional loss of over \$1 billion each year in plant foods such as nitrogen.

Soil erosion happens in three major steps. First, Munkittrick explains, topsoil is loosened by the impact of raindrops or action of water runoff; second soil particles are moved along with water; and third, they are deposited at new locations which may not be the most desirable.

Erosion goes on all the time.

Normal erosion (called geologic erosion) occurs where water and wind remove soil or rock from slopes that have not been disturbed by man. This is natural and unavoidable.

"But man accelerates erosion when he breaks up the soil surface and removes protective soil-holding vegetation," Munkittrick emphasizes.

Accelerated soil loss can occur from growing crops, irrigation, mining, raising livestock, logging, urban and rural construction, and recreation, unless preventive measures are used.

Over the years, SCS has determined the average loss each different soil can tolerate without reducing its productive capacity. Some areas can lose only one ton of soil per acre per year, while others can lose as much as five tons without damage.

Technology for controlling soil erosion is relatively simple, Munkittrick explains, but in a democratic country, application of conservation measures is primarily voluntary and, therefore, the application is at a

much slower rate than needed.

But these efforts must not be minimized. Without existing conservation practices, cropland soil losses would be another one billion tons each year.

"The years of leaving land because it is worn out are gone because there is no place else to go, Munkittrick says. "We must work carefully with the land we have and preserve it for future generations."

By the 1980s, the U.S. government had spent approximately \$15

billion for conservation efforts. This sum, spent over a 40-year period, represents less than one percent of the gross national product during 1975 alone.

Competing land and water uses and shared boundaries between public and private landowners can complicate conservation efforts.

"One key to making a combination of voluntary and regulatory measures work is for each landowner and user to participate and assist in identifying erosion problems and help in

designing long-range conservation strategy for their land," Munkittrick concludes.

In 1978, Pennsylvania soil conservation districts and the SCS took a big step to involve local people. They asked local people to express their opinions on natural resource problems.

"More than 89 percent said erosion is still a problem. Identifying the problem is the first step in solving it," the SCS chief explains.

## Few candidates attend farmland preserve talks

LANCASTER — Less than a third of the invited candidates showed up at a public forum meeting of the Lancaster County Agricultural Preserve Board on Friday, May 7, in the Lancaster County Courthouse.

Of the 17 candidates for Lancaster County seats in the General Assembly and State Senate, five were present at the session.

Actually, there were more members of the Preserve Board

present than their were candidates.

Noone from the public attended the session, which was designed to give legislative candidates an explanation of the county's proposed deed restriction program and give them an opportunity to ask any questions about it or the state legislation that is needed to implement it.

Principal reason for the light turnout of candidates appeared to be the 3:30 p.m. scheduling of the meeting.

Attending candidates were Anna E. Groff, R-Lancaster, candidate for the 96th District; Harry S. McMichael II, D-Columbia, 98th District; Harry F. Muscarelli, D-East Petersburg, 97th District; Norman O. Aamodt, D-Cochranville; and Noah W. Wenger, R-Stevens, candidates for the 36th Senatorial Seat.

An exchange of views developed between Aamodt and Wenger over how approval of the preservation legislation might be best secured.

Aamodt expressed the belief that a Democrat would gain broader support for farmland preservation in the cities.

Wenger explained he has always had bipartisan support for his legislation, such as the Right To Farm bill, which passed the Senate last week.

"If we put partisanship in agricultural legislation, then we're in trouble," Wenger said.

"Farmers are in a minority and if we split them into two parts, then we'll have nothing."

Republican County Commissioner James E. Huber and Democratic Commissioner Jean Mowery then exchanged supportive statements for their respective party standard bearers.

## Crop insurance hearings begin

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Senator Jesse Helms, chairman of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry, has announced that oversight hearings on the federal crop insurance program will be held May 20 and 21.

Senator Thad Cochran, chairman of the Subcommittee on Agricultural Production, Marketing and Stabilization of Prices, will chair the hearings, which are scheduled for 10 a.m. in

Room 324 Russell Senate Office Building.

Cochran said the hearings will focus on the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation's marketing program, general producer attitude toward the program, and adequacy and cost of FCIC coverage.

Cochran has invited representatives of farm organizations, the Administration, and the crop insurance industry.

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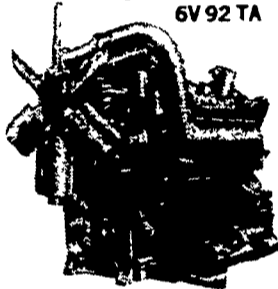
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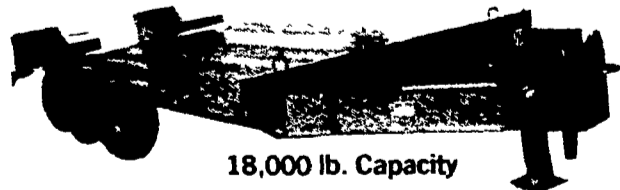
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