

Md. SCS encourages "do-it-yourself" practices

COLLEGE PARK — More Maryland farmland is being protected from erosion this year compared to last even though the number of farmers who are applying conservation measures is down somewhat.

According to Gerald R. Calhoun, state conservationist for the U.S. Soil Conservation Service, the tight economy is forcing farmers to defer more expensive structural measures such as diversions, drop structures, and waterways in favor of less costly vegetative practices

"We've actually had a 42 percent increase during the first half of 1982 in the amount of land protected compared to last year," says Calhoun. "By protected we mean that the erosion rate has been reduced to tolerable or soil replacement levels. Our field offices have also reported a 73 percent increase in the amount of land treated, that is where the erosion rate has been brought down to even less than tolerable rates."

Calhoun also said interest in

conserving soil and water is even higher than last year, with the number of people requesting SCS assistance up 15 percent this year. Unfortunately, many farmers are shelving their plans hoping for a turn around in the economy.

"Farmers with erosion problems should not wait to correct them. We're encouraging landowners to use vegetative practices which don't cost much such as conservation tillage, contouring, stripcropping, and grass filter

strips. We're also emphasizing more 'do-it-yourself'-type practices such as diversions and waterways which farmers can plow in with their own equipment," Calhoun said.

Also, farmers should be aware that there are more options available for financial help on conservation practices. For example, the Rural Clean Water Program in Carroll County and the Clean Lakes Program in Baltimore County provide special

cost sharing rates. ASCS also has special cost sharing incentives in special project areas around the state in addition to their normal ACP program.

"You can't afford to squander your soil no matter what the economic circumstances," Calhoun says. "We're looking for more creative ways to help farmers save soil as well as money."

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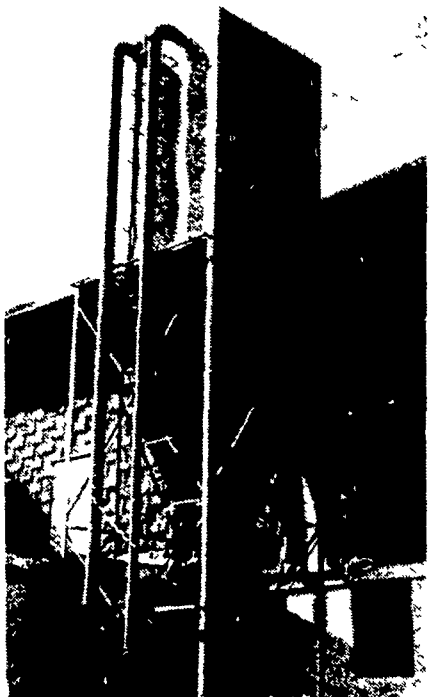
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