



Off the Sounding Board

By Sheila Miller, Editor

Chesapeake's survival depends on us

When most of us think about the Chesapeake Bay, what comes to mind is an eternal haven for boaters, fishermen, and oyster lovers. This 400-mile long inlet of the Atlantic is said to produce more oysters, crabs, clams and fin fish than any other comparable body of water anywhere in the world.

But there's a group of people who are looking below the surface of the Chesapeake Bay. Their motive is to try and save this recreation hotspot and shell fish home.

Last month these conservationists met to discuss the Bay, which they consider "the most important salt water estuary in the United States." The problem they are trying to come to grips with is the increased load of sediment which continually pours into the bay, and threatens to smother this important commercial body of water.

The Chesapeake's struggle to survive the tons of sediment that have poured from the mouths of tributaries is not a new dilemma — it's been happening for centuries as storms and snowmelts caused streams to swell, and banks to be scoured away.

What has changed over the years, however, is what's been added to that sediment load in the form of chemical waste. That's where the problem arises.

In one chapter of his book entitled Chesapeake, novelist James Michener dramatically described the deadly effects sediment has on sea life in the Bay. This famous writer told of buried oyster beds lost forever to shell fishermen, the loss of breeding grounds for waterfowl and crabs, and the slow death of the Bay and all that depend on it for survival.

Last month's study shows that concern over the water-carried pollution continuously entering the Bay has not been diminished with time — if anything, the concern has intensified. And with more people growing alarmed at what's happening to the Chesapeake, Pennsylvania's inland farmers need to take heed.

Why should a body of water that lies an entire state away be critical to us? Because the "finger" of blame for most of the problems of sediment load in the Bay is being pointed in our direction.

According to the study, the Susquehanna River is the largest fresh water tributary flowing into the Bay and it contributes more than its share of sediment, nutrients, and toxic wastes.

The study claims 45 to 50 percent of all the nutrients in the Susquehanna River originate in watersheds feeding the lower portion of the

river, and 78 percent of all the phosphorus and 90 percent of all the nitrogen comes from non-point sources — i.e. agriculture.

The study also claims that from 3 to 6 million pounds of phosphorus and 50 million pounds of nitrogen are delivered to the Chesapeake from the Susquehanna River each year. This conservation group contends that "an acre of high-till cropland can contribute 19.25 pounds of phosphorus, which can be reduced to 2.75 pounds by using low-till" farming methods.

With those statistics as ammunition for their cause, these conservationists will be keeping a close watch on farming practices here in Pennsylvania, primarily in the southeast. But all farmers whose lands eventually drain into the 444-mile long river, even those near Ostego Lake in New York, need to scrutinize their agrarian methods.

How much soil is being washed off your fields each time it rains? Is that chocolate-brown stream racing down corn stalk rows a man-made problem, or just a quirk of nature? How many tons of topsoil, fertilizer, herbicides and insecticides can you afford to lose?

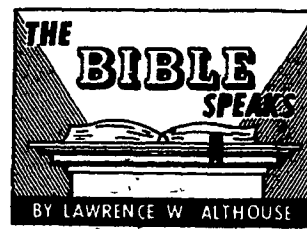
If your answers to the first and last questions were "none" give yourself an A-plus. And if your conscience forces you to admit you've got a serious problem with erosion each time it rains, give yourself a pat on the back.

Understanding you have a problem with controlling soil erosion and nonpoint pollution is the first step necessary in bringing it under control. Once you realize something has to be done, there are state and federal agencies that are more than willing to offer free technical advice and cost-sharing dollars to help solve the problem.

Two weeks ago, the Lancaster Conservation District reported some of the county's fertile soils had lost an average 10-20 inches since 1945 due to deeper plowing and erosion.

Although farmers in Pennsylvania have not felt the pain and suffering experienced by Great Plains farmers after the Dustbowl rendered their farms barren and worthless, we too are realizing the costs of soil erosion. Novelist John Steinbeck, in his book The Grapes of Wrath, told how farmers, without fertile land and productive soils, were forced to abandon their homes and move on, some to new farms, most to low-paying jobs in the cities.

So as not to suffer similar fates, farmers who care enough to save their soil through sound conservation farming also will be helping to preserve farmland and ultimately save the Chesapeake from sediment suffocation.



IF YOU WANT TO HEAR GOD'S VOICE
September 12, 1982

Background Scripture:
Genesis 15
Devotional Reading:
Hebrews 6:13-20
The Time:
Any Sunday Morning.
The Place:
Your Church.
The Occasion:
The Sunday morning worship service.

The time has come in the service for the Pastor's announcements. But before he can begin to read from the worship bulletin, a man stands up a few pews in front of you and in a quiet tone that nevertheless reaches the far corners of the sanctuary: "I'd like to share with you this morning a most wonderful experience that happened to me a few days ago. I had a vision in which God called me by name and said..."

We don't have to carry the little story any further for its sheer absurdity to become quite evident: it has probably never happened in your church and it is never likely to do so. For one thing, it would seem that people don't have that kind of experience any more, for another, if they do, they know better than to tell of them in church.

In A Vision

Yet, none of us think it particularly surprising that Genesis 15

begins with this declaration: "the Lord came to Abram in a vision..." In fact, the whole story of Abram/Abraham is the direct result of his mystical revelations from God. Although Abram was at an age—the retirement years—when most people have settled into a definite pattern (read "rut", if you like), the visionary messages which Abram received from God changed both his name and the whole course of his life, not to mention the world.

Most of us have been raised in a culture which, despite our religion or because of it, has managed to indoctrinate us into rejecting anything visionary or mystical. We are dutifully respectful of the role visions played in the Bible, but we assume that both the growth of intellect and reason have made the mystical obsolete at the very least.

It is interesting and ironic, therefore, that today various scientists and others are telling us that our minds comprise two very different faculties: reason and intuition. The left side of the brain is the reasoning faculty, whereas the right side of the brain is much more intuitive ("mystical" some would say). We have too much relied upon the left side of our brain. The well-balanced person will use both kinds of faculties.

"But Abram Said..."

In Genesis 15 we find Abram doing just that. Seeing and hearing God in a vision, he attempts to deal with it in a reasonable way: "But Abram said, 'O Lord God, what wilt thou give me, for I continue you childless...!' Abram's life was transformed because in responding to God he used both his reason and his intuitive faculties. If you would hear God's voice, you must do no less.

NOW IS THE TIME

By Jay Irwin

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To Check Feed Bins

We are coming into the fall season where we see considerable temperature change from day to night. This causes a lot of moisture condensation, as we see it on car windows in the morning. This same type of condensation takes place in the bulk feed bins on our farms. It causes the build-up of molds on the bins and in the feed.

When feed bins are cleaned out, they should be inspected thoroughly, right down to the boot. Also, when you are taking feed out of the bin, keep a close watch for chunks of feed, it will tell you if a problem is developing.

After cleaning out the bin, it should be sprayed with a mold inhibitor and allowed to dry. You can use calcium propionate solution, as the inhibitor, at the rate of 2 ounces per gallon of water for this spray. One of the best ways to prevent this condensation problem is to insulate the bin. The insulation will slow down the temperature fluctuation.

So take time to check the feed as it comes out of the bin, and inspect the bins for possible leaks where rain can enter.

To Stop Fertilizing Trees and Shrubs

The time is here when we should not be applying any fertilizer to rose bushes, trees and shrubs. The season's growing period is about over and new growth should have a chance to harden before cold weather arrives. When we fertilize during the Fall we encourage new growth, which will be tender, and will winter-kill in zero weather.

It is best to wait until early Spring to apply any plant food to

these types of plants. Mulching is a good practice to help conserve moisture and control weeds, but keep the fertilizer in the bag until the 1983 season.

To Review Agricultural Outlook

As I reviewed the August issue of the U.S.D.A. Agricultural Outlook, I saw some interesting facts. The early summer outlook points to large U.S. crop supplies for the new marketing season, with the supply of soybeans likely to rise 3% from last year, wheat supplies 2% and corn 4%.

In contrast with rising crop supplies, total meat and poultry supplies for 1982 are still expected to drop about 3%, led by a large decline in pork output. Supplies of poultry and beef will likely increase moderately. While hog prices may climb 25% for the year, cattle prices may average 4 to 7% higher. Broiler prices are forecast to remain near last year's average. The price projections reflect expectations of a moderate economic recovery in the second half. We hope this will happen.

To Check Stored Grain

Farmers should check all their stored grain at this time of year, because heating of stored grain can be a symptom of insect activity or just too much moisture. In either case, the heating problem should be corrected before the grain is ruined. If grain requires fumigation to control pests, it should be done while air temperature is still fairly high or above 6 degrees F. If it's moisture, then check for possible leaks. We have too much money invested in the seed, fertilizer and labor to lose it in storage.

OUR READERS WRITE

Cap collector, too

I saw the article in Lancaster Farming about Pete Backus collecting caps. (May 1, 1982 issue) I have been collecting caps for about seven years and have 1,564 different caps — and I never bought any.

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I am 78 years old and a retired railroad worker. I have had my picture with caps in several different papers.

My collection consists of farming, baseball caps, football caps, all fast service food places, drinks,

etc. I have several from overseas. Any place that is in some sort of business, I show them my picture and if they don't give me a cap I won't buy it.

Francis Marien
Kellogg, MN

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