Terrace plow cuts conservation costs

HARRISBURG — "Effective conservation measures need not be expensive" explains Joel Myers, District Conservationist with the Soil Conservation Service in Dauphin County.

Myers, who recently spoke to Earth Moving Contractors at the Pennsylvania Land Improvement Contractors Annual Meeting, as well as Earth Moving Contractors in Dauphin County, points to Dauphin County's leadership in innovation conservation.

During the past several years; Myers and Sand Swank, Soil Conservation Technician, have been utilizing farm equipment and

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a new terracing plow in their efforts to install effective soil conservation practices at reduced costs.

Since a terrace plow demonstration in the fall of 1981 at the Paul Clugston farm near Halifax, more than 20,000 feet of croplant terraces have been constructed utilizing the terrace plow and farm tractor and moldboard plow throughout Dauphin County. Myers explained that the average cost is 26 cents per foot; which includes the cost of the terrace plow or farm equipment, as well as any heavy earth moving equipment that was neded to complete the job. Previous construction costs had exceeded \$1.00 per foot.

Myers and Swank were not satisfied with just building terraces. Diversions as well as grassed waterways are also essential practices. During 1982, several diversions and waterways were constructed using alternative

methods. Average costs for diversions were 40 cents per foot, waterways 24 cents per foot. These represented savings of over 70 cents per foot for diversions and over 85 cents per foot for waterways.

Myers cautioned that in some instances heavy equipment must be used in conjunction with farm equipment or the terrace plow; and in some instances heavy equipment may be needed to complete the entire practice.

In summary, Myers stated that the installation of terraces, waterways and diversions is essential to reduce soil losses to acceptable levels throughout Dauphin County. The cost of these practices may be surpisingly low depending on the actual construction technique required. He indicated that several farmers have been able to complete the entire conservation needs on their farm by doing their own work.

Myers added that when annual

soil losses per acre are costing as much as \$100/acre per year, terraces, diversions and waterways are insurance against such losses to a farmer. For further information concerning cost effective conservation practices contact the Harrisburg Field Office of the Soil Conservation Service at 75 So. Houcks Rd., Suite 301, Harrisburg, Pa. 17109, or phone (717) 652-7035.



Conservation measures at reduced costs are applied to shale soils of Dauphin County with terrace plow.

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