

Ag leaders in Md. discuss bay problems

ANNAPOLIS, Md. — Agricultural leaders from Maryland recently met with members of the EPA Chesapeake Bay Program to discuss conservation efforts by agriculture to improve conditions in the bay.

At the meeting were representatives of the University of Maryland, the Soil Conservation Service, the Maryland Department of Agriculture, the Department of Natural Resources, and the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene.

Ms. Tippie, Technical Director

of the Chesapeake Bay Program, said she saw no quick fix solution to bay pollution problems and that no single solution exists for all areas of the bay.

The consensus of the meeting was that the best way for agricultural efforts to be involved was in the evaluations of the findings and development of the practices to address the major impact issues brought forth in the study.

There was concern expressed by the agricultural community that the State's 206 Agricultural Plan

was not being taken advantage of by the Chesapeake Bay Program. This Plan provides the basis to control runoff of sediment and animal waste. The plan is approved by both the State and EPA as a mechanism to address water quality problems.

Those present at the meeting agreed that more research on Best Management Practices is needed to determine a more effective solution to control nitrogen runoff. Nitrogen is very water soluble and can quickly enter streams, waterways and the bay through the

normal drainage dynamics of the area.

Interestingly enough is the fact that the potential critical areas established in the 206 Plan in 1979 closely parallel the critical areas outlined in the preliminary draft of the EPA's Chesapeake Bay Management Study.

Also agreed by all parties at the meeting was the agriculture should continue working voluntarily through the 24 local Maryland Soil Conservation Districts which have state, local and federal involvement as this is the best mechanism for developing even more site specific conservation plans.

The meeting was the first time Maryland agricultural leaders have had a roundtable discussion

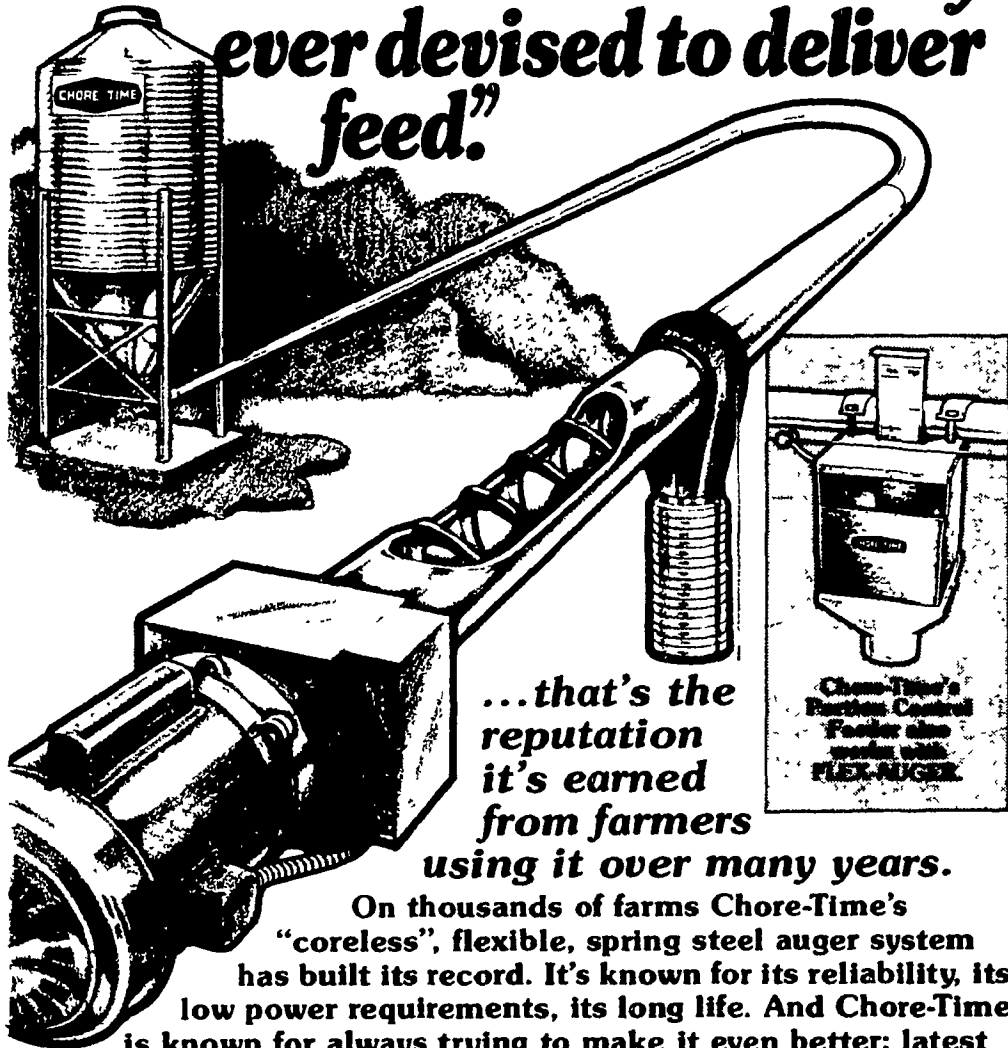
about the final reports with the EPA's Chesapeake Bay Program Technical Director and the agriculturalists seemed pleased with the outcome.

At the meeting Frank Bentz of the University of Maryland said that agriculture understands that it is part of the Bay problem but he has long believed that it has received an unfair portion of the blame for the complex problem.

He went on to say that agriculture also needs some recognition for its efforts so far. He pointed out that a major portion of cultivated land in Maryland is already being planted using minimal tillage systems and that many farms in the state already have soil conservation plans and are implementing them.

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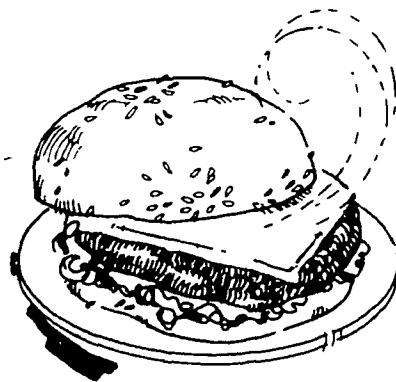


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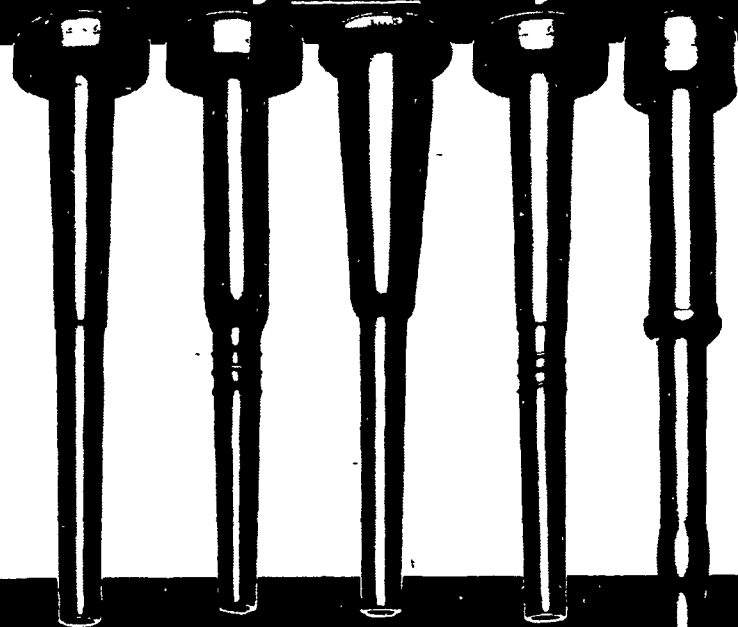
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