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\$7.50 per Year

Excess nitrates in 60% of Upper Conestoga test wells

Ag economy slows farmer participation

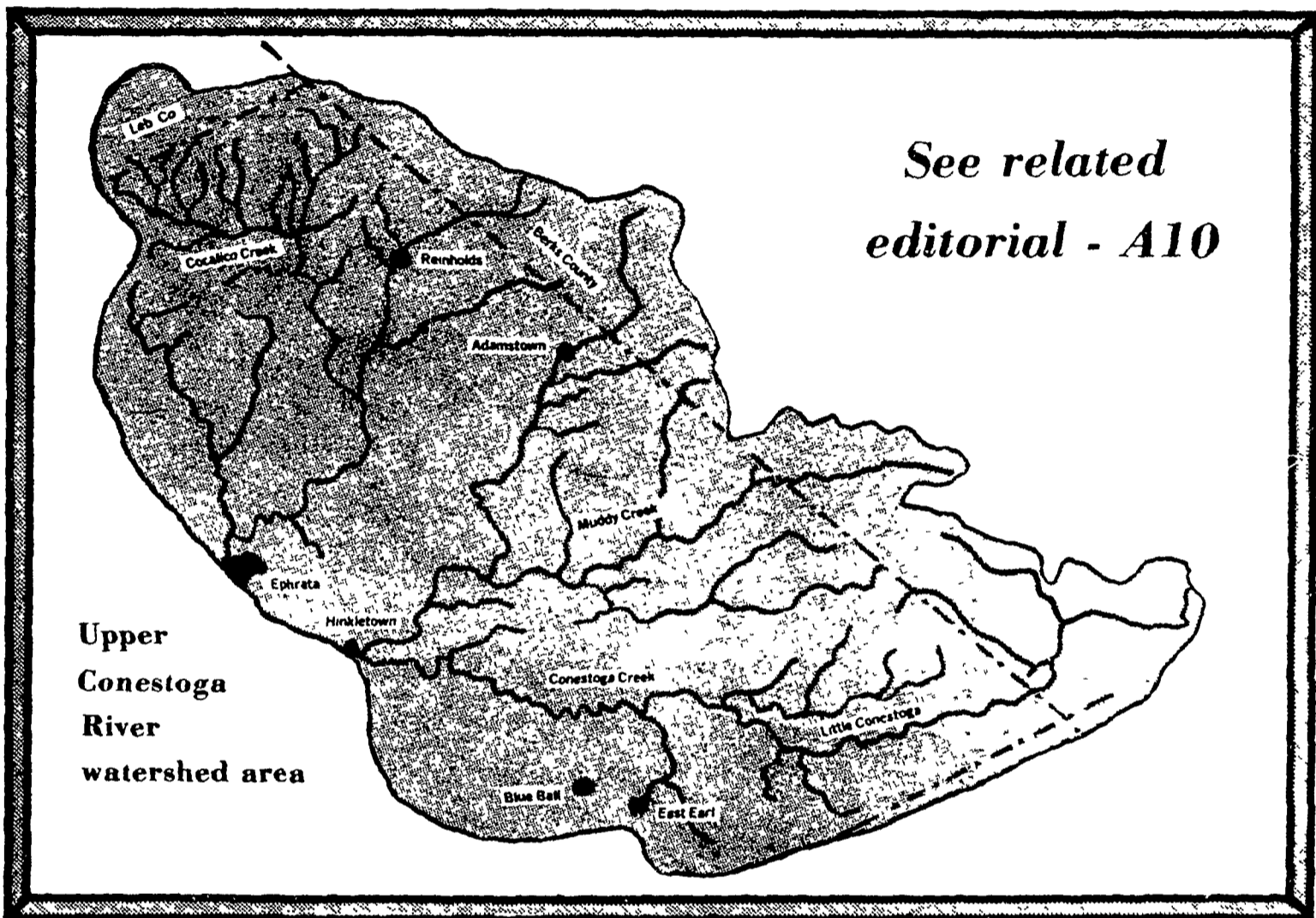
BY DICK ANGLESTEIN
CHURCHTOWN — At least three preliminary findings are emerging out of the effort to clean up ag pollution in the Upper Conestoga River watershed in Northeastern Lancaster County after two years of signing up cooperating farmers and a year of water quality monitoring.

First — Nitrate levels in 60 percent of the farm and home wells tested throughout the 150 square miles of the overall watershed exceed recommended levels for drinking water. The nitrate levels discovered in testing by the U.S. Geological Service range up to four times recommended safe drinking water levels, which can be described as the "dangerous" level.

Second — Total cleanup of the critical area of the watershed — those farms nearest the Conestoga or tributaries — will likely cost the Federal Government twice what was originally expected.

Third — Participation of farmers in the cost-sharing effort to install better management practices to improve water quality has been significantly slowed by the recession in the ag economy.

The impact of the Upper Conestoga findings stretches well beyond the confines of Northeastern Lancaster County. This area drains into the Conestoga River, into the Susquehanna River



and into the Chesapeake Bay, where several states have become concerned about the effects of pollution — largely ag manure and chemical runoff — on the ecological future of the Bay.

Three levels of monitoring are being conducted or planned by the USGS, according to hydrologist

Jim Gerhart, who is working in the area.

The largest study scope is the entire Upper Conestoga headwaters of 150 square miles.

More concentrated study will be directed at a six-square-mile area of the Little Conestoga near Churchtown and a large-scale effort to sign up participating farmers will be launched shortly in this area.

And, a 25-acre field near Churchtown — not in the above area — will receive the most detailed study to attempt to directly trace how nitrogen combines with rainwater forming nitrates and moves into groundwater or streams to cause pollution of the water quality.

The monitoring thus far has been

limited primarily to the overall 150-square-mile watershed and is baseline testing to determine water quality before better management practices have been installed.

Stream flow and water quality have been monitored on the Little Conestoga, the Conestoga near Terre Hill, the Cocalico and Muddy Creek.

Groundwater has been sampled and analyzed from 43 wells on farms and homesites throughout the area. Testing was done in September, 1982; March, 1983; June, 1983; and within the past week.

Of the 43 wells tested, 60 percent or 25 have been found to have water with nitrate levels above the recommended levels for drinking.

Average nitrate levels in water is about one to three parts per million.

Recommended drinking water levels is 10 parts per million.

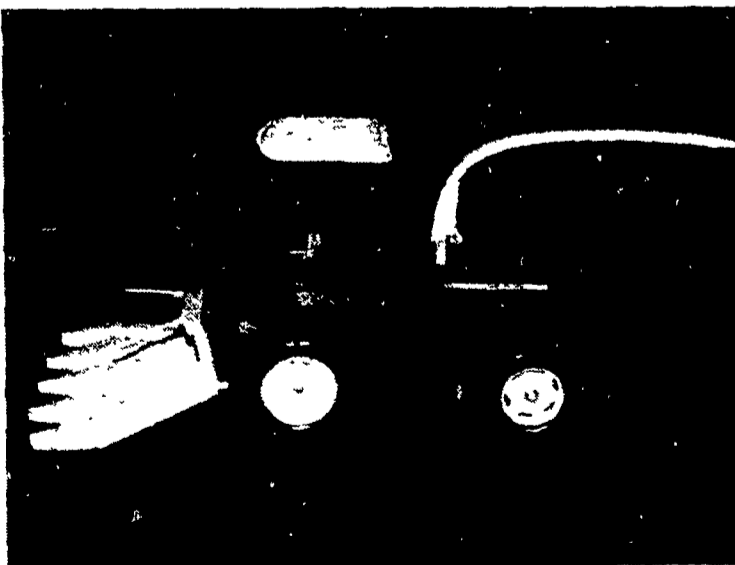
The levels in the 25 wells exceed the 10 PPM and range up to 40 PPM. This level was found on a chicken farm. Nitrogen levels in poultry manure are extremely high.

The nitrate levels were found to be the highest in the Spring when manure or chemical fertilizers are spread and the rainfall is highest. And it is much worse in the valley limestone areas than in the higher shale or sandstone soils.

Work in the six-square-mile area of the Little Conestoga near

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Kid's stuff goes big time



Remember that tractor or farm wagon you got under the Christmas tree 30 or 40 years ago.

Hang on to it. There are people out there interested in it and willing to pay big money for it.

Farm toys have gone big time. That was the message out of a farm toy show and sale held in Lancaster County last weekend. One of the features of the show was this hand-built scale model of a John Deere Super Chopper. For more about the toys, turn to Page D30.

Drought help — no freebies

HARRISBURG — Commonwealth farmers hit hard by the drought will likely have to rely on the low-interest Farmers Home Administration loans instead of any "freebies" as promoted by a Pennsylvania senator.

State FmHA officials this week officially announced the ground rules for the low-interest loans in the 17 designated southcentral and southeastern counties about a week after U.S. Ag Sec. John Block personally carried the loan message to Pennsylvania.

Also this week, the Senate unanimously approved a resolution put forth by Democratic Sen. Michael O'Pake, of Berks

County, calling on the Governor to make \$5 million available out of the Emergency Management Services Code as grants or no-interest loans to drought-stricken farmers.

But the Governor's Office indicated that Thornburgh believes that the FmHA program is the way to help farmers in view of the scope of the possible \$200 million loss in the Commonwealth.

The Governor's Office said it was thought that the normal federal loan channels would be a better and more equitable way to help farmers.

FmHA officials have urged farmers to make application for

their loans as quickly as possible since about 60 days will be needed for processing.

Qualified farmers with losses of at least 30 percent of a normal year's production are eligible to borrow up to 80 percent of the actual loss up to a maximum of \$500,000.

For borrowers unable to get loans through regular lending channels, the interest rate is 5 percent on the first \$100,000 and eight percent on the remainder.

The interest rate on FmHA-backed loans through private lenders is 13.75 percent.

Deadline for application is April 11, 1983.