

# Kitchen table meetings promote conservation

BY JOYCE BUPP  
Staff Correspondent

**GLEN ROCK** — While top environmental and political figures meet around polished board room tables to debate the planned cleanup of the Chesapeake Bay, landowners in part of the watershed are looking at the problem from their own point of view.

Over soup and sandwiches in the spacious kitchen of the Clarence and Darlene Godfrey farm home, at Glen Rock R2, a handful of local farmers shared conservation concerns.

This casual "kitchen" meeting is part of the strategy devised by local soil conservation officials to pinpoint grass roots problems in the targeted South and East Branches of the Codorus Creek watershed.

Not only does this portion of the Codorus join the greater Chesapeake watershed area, it

also provides the sole source of drinking water for the greater York metropolitan area.

By meeting with small groups of farmers, like the nine who turned out for the first local target area discussion, conservationists hope to stir new interest in erosion control installations by landowners who have never previously taken part in preventing soil and water runoff.

In addition, Conservation District and Soil Conservation leaders hope to rekindle interest in updating conservation plans that may be a decade or two old, and no longer adequate for newer intense cropping methods.

Some \$70,000 of Mason-Dixon Erosion Control Area monies have been allocated for use in York County's targeted area, in addition to previously budgeted conservation practice funds of \$70,000. Target erosion area funds are for

erosion control practices only, and may not be used toward animal waste facilities.

Manure runoff, a prime focus of the Chesapeake Bay problem studies, is expected to be addressed in a special \$2 million conservation practices cost sharing proposal submitted by Pennsylvania, with half of that total likely aimed at six counties in the state's Susquehanna River basin.

"Farmers are doing a lot of little things on their own that are working," soil conservationist Lee Bentz told this initial gathering of Codorus watershed farm owners. "We want to set up meaningful demonstrations using local farmers who are willing to share what they're doing with others."

Bentz is especially interested in finding farm sites along major highways where he can set up



Among Codorus watershed farmers expressing concern to York soil conservationist Lee Bentz is dairy producer Barbara Taylor.

erosion and runoff control demonstrations easily accessible to anyone interested.

Already, plans are underway for spring seedings of "switchgrass," a perennial summer forage developed especially for beef cattle. Potential yields from this crop, which grows back from a 4-5 inch stubble, are "fantastic" Bentz says. While initially expensive to establish, the crop should never need reseeded if properly managed.

Another forage possibility is Kentucky 31 Fescue, a durable grass that turns unpalatable in summer's heat and could be planted to, discourage cattle from overgrazing steep slopes prone to erosion under heavy summer storms. Cool weather renders grass more tasty to cattle, for winter grazing needs.

Dairyman could possibly use such a grass, Bentz figures, to discourage cattle from grazing stream edges bare and erosion-prone.

Conservation district manager Linda Houseal also issued a request for demonstration sites for no-till small grain seedings. Staffers will help locate no-till seeding equipment for farmers

interested in cooperating on such demonstration plantings.

"We've got to start somewhere," says Bentz of the initial neighborhood meeting, an idea he and Ms. Houseal hope will be repeated across the 14 Pennsylvania and 8 Maryland counties in the Mason-Dixon Erosion Control Area that forms the Chesapeake watershed.

A concurrence of farmers at the session was that major soil and water runoff problems are being created by absentee landowners renting for the highest dollar-per-acre obtainable, with little concern over enforcing conservation practices.

Often, they agree, hilltop-to-valley-bottom corn or beans creates heavy top-soil losses and sediment problems, since no grass or hay crop strips are left lay to catch and utilize heavy downpours or groundwater runoff.

Conservation practices continue to be strictly voluntary measures, with conservationists available for advice and technical assistance.

Landowners interested in such assistance may contact the Conservation District offices at the York County Home Complex at 122 Pleasant Acres Road, York, or call 755-2966 or 755-0406.

## Mid-Atlantic Direct Marketers to convene in Lancaster

**LANCASTER** — The 1984 Mid-Atlantic Direct Marketing Conference will be held at Americana's Host Farm Resort in Lancaster on February 21-23. Some of the finest direct farm markets in Pennsylvania are located in Lancaster County. With over 50 such markets in the county, direct marketing is highly competitive.

On Tuesday afternoon, Feb. 21, a tour of three selected direct marketing outlets in the Lancaster area has been planned. Last year was the first time to have a tour with the conference and it was a big hit. This year the tour will include Cherry Hill Orchards Outlet, Pine View Dairy Market, and Central Lancaster's Farmer's Market.

Wednesday's schedule offers a full day of seminars, workshops, and panel discussions. A general session in the morning will focus on merchandising. Multiple educational sessions in the afternoon will deal with displays, merchandising, advertising, and promotion. A panel discussion will address the question of how to get started in direct marketing. A separate session will address concerns of milk jugglers.

Wednesday evening convention goers will have the opportunity to dine and relax. A banquet and presentation of awards are scheduled early in the evening followed by dancing, swimming and entertainment.

"Motivation and success stories" are the subject of Thursday's general sessions. Successful direct market operators will talk on selecting and training employees, and bringing customers back.

A commercial exhibit area will feature over 50 exhibitors who will have displays set up throughout the entire conference.

Sponsors for the event are Cooperative Extension Service in Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey and Pennsylvania, Retail Farm Market Division-PFA, Maryland Farm Market Association, Pennsylvania Milk Juggling Association, and the soon to be formed Delaware Direct Marketing Association.

Registration for the tour and conference is required. A late registration fee can be avoided by registering with one of the above sponsors before Feb. 14.

Persons who would like to have accommodations at Host Farm Resort, should contact the resort directly at telephone 717-299-5500.

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