

Allentown conference stresses farmland protection

ALLENTOWN — Township, county, and state officials gathered in Allentown last week to discuss protecting the state's farmlands at the Farmland Protection Conference. Co-sponsored by the Lehigh County Farmer's Association and the Lehigh County Extension Service, the conference introduced the concept of land evaluation and site assessment (LESA) to the planning officials.

Developed by Lloyd Wright, land use division, U.S. Soil Conservation Service, Washington, D.C., LESA is a system designed to protect the best farmland in an area by evaluating its agricultural quality and viability. It helps land use decision makers put the protection of farmland as a priority in their

zoning decisions.

LESA is based on a point system of 300 points with a maximum of 100 points assigned to land evaluation and 200 points assigned to site assessment. A higher point value designates farmland to be protected in the system. The system has the flexibility to accommodate differences among states and localities and eliminates any bias when making land use decisions.

In addressing the governmental officials, Wright stated that a system for land evaluation is used to carry out federal policy. The SCS offices handle the land evaluation and make the findings available to each locality.

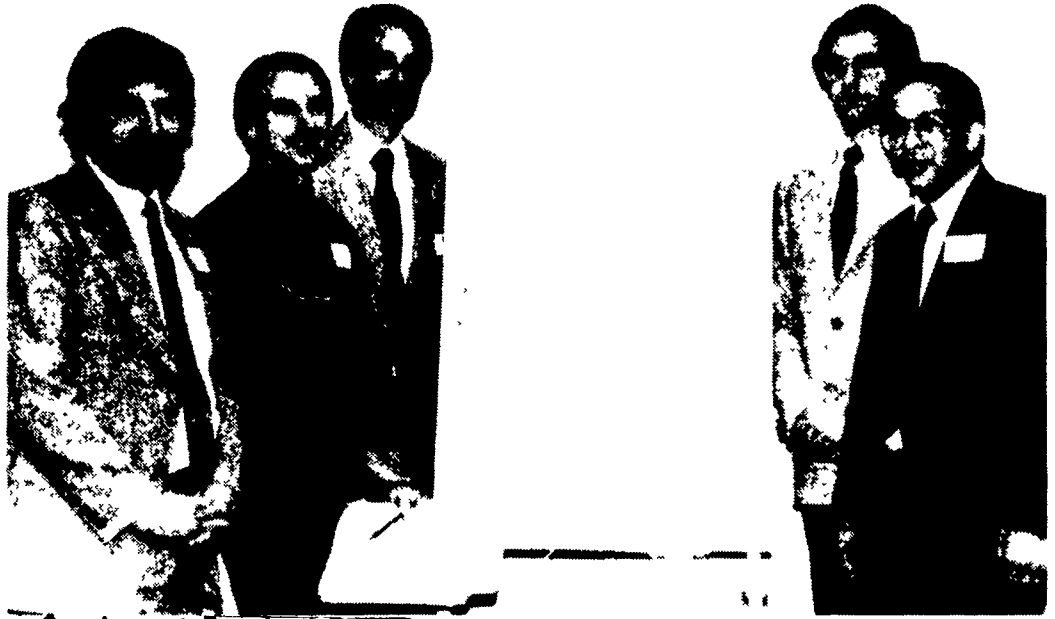
Site assessment is left to the local level of government, either

the county or township. "We found it (LESA) works better if you put more emphasis on site

assessment," Wright stated. Site assessment deals with the percentage of agriculture within one

and one-half miles of the site, the percentage of agriculture adjacent

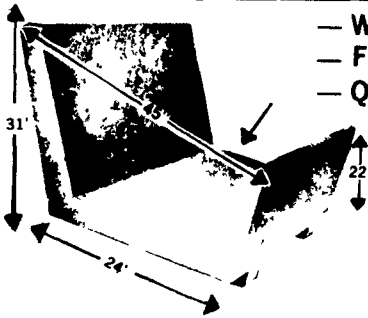
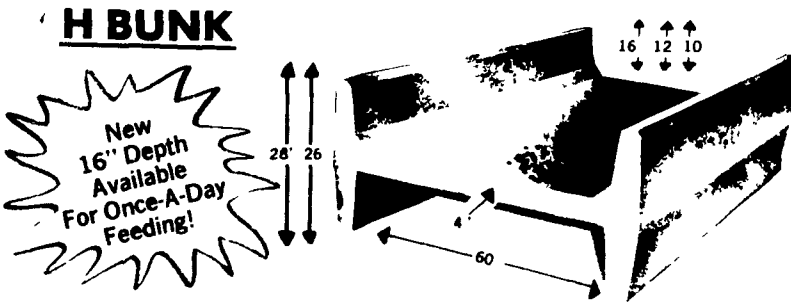
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Speakers at Farmland Protection Conference in Allentown include, from the left, Kenneth Friedman, coordinator, Thomas Klucick, Barry Frantz, Lloyd Wright and Frederick Brock.

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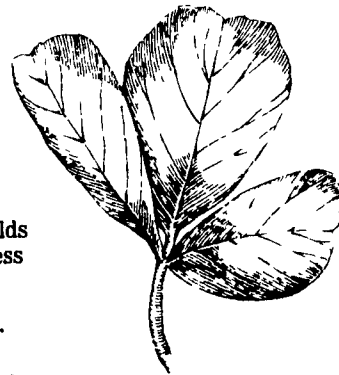
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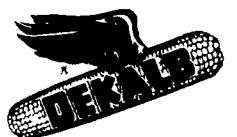


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