

# Farmland preservation

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1982, as a joint venture involving the PFA and AFT.

Wheeler noted that a number of successful methods of preserving farmland are currently in use elsewhere, with the most effective method being the purchase of development rights, (PDR).

Implemented in a number of northeastern and middle atlantic states, the program involves removing development potential by restricting land use to agriculture. In the form of an easement, the government purchases the right to insure agricultural use of the farmer's land. When the land is sold, the selling farmer is compensated in an amount equal to the difference between fair market value and the agricultural value of his real estate.

The meeting continued with Maryland grain and beef farmer Wayne McGinnis' presentation of his state's successful preservation program based on PDR.

Maryland's program is based on

the allocation of real estate transfer tax revenues to an Agricultural Land Preservation Fund used for the purchase of development rights.

Participating farmers must enter at least 100 acres to qualify, whereupon the landowner is offered an easement value based on the assessments of two appraisers. The farmer has 30 days to accept or reject the offer, and all those accepting are bound to a five-year contract.

Initiated in 1977, Maryland's PDR program accounted for 14,859 acres during its first year.

PFA president Keith Eckel began his presentation by providing more statistics pointing to the alarming disappearance of farmland statewide.

With agriculture responsible for the employment of one out of five Pennsylvanians, Eckel said, we can no longer permit the current trend to continue unchecked.

Eckel warned that water shortages and high transportation costs will render western

agricultural products prohibitively expensive, increasing the urgency of eastern land preservation

While we are appreciative of past progress, we must take a new and bold approach to preservation, Eckel said. The PFA endorses the concept of the purchase of development rights," he continued, "and we suggest that the Maryland program is consistent with the policies of the PFA."

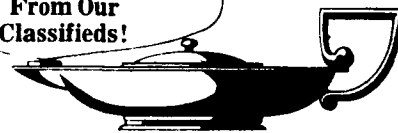
Addressing the subject of funding, Eckel pointed to a number of possibilities including a transfer tax, bond issues, or an income tax, and recommended that all citizens should bear the burden since all will benefit.

After listening to the three speakers, Agriculture Secretary Penrose Hallowell endorsed the concept of PDR, emphasizing that such a system should be voluntary, provide for local control, and provide just compensation for landowners.

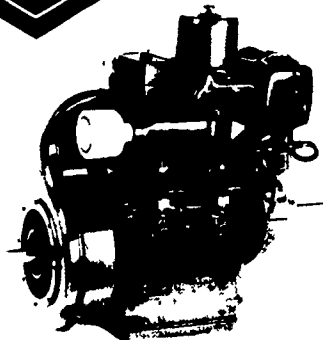
Though the program will certainly have a pricetag, Hallowell urged citizens to recognize farmland preservation as an investment in the future.

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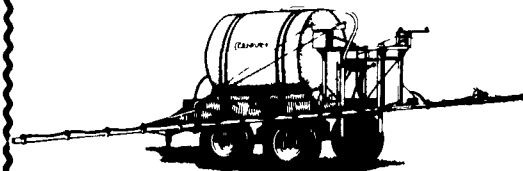
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