

Saving soil

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"With high organic matter, the soil has better water holding capacity," Willis said. "It feels soft and pliable after three or four years of leaving residue, planting cover-crop and spreading manure." They haul and apply manure to even the distant, rented ground.

They plan to use ammonium sulfate as the nitrogen source this year. "Ammonium sulfate should stay around longer without being leached. There can be a greater nitrogen loss with other nitrogen sources depending on weather conditions during the growing season," Willis explained.

Hockings have planted corn no-till for the past several years.

Morris Matson, Lincoln University, owner of 54 acres of ground rented by the Hockings, is very particular about who he rents his ground to. "I insist on no-till corn to reduce soil movement on my land. A former renter insisted that he would plow and use conventional tillage. That was when I

made arrangements with the Hockings to crop my land," Matson said.

"We would like to see other land owners who are renting their ground, be as concerned about their capital assets," Marshall Haws, Executive Conservationist with the District, said. "A survey done by the District two years ago, indicated that a large part of the sediment found on neighboring property and in the streams was apt to come from rented ground," he explained.

"In most cases the renter was unable to secure a long term agreement from the land owner. There was no incentive for the renter to install good conservation practices," Haws continued, "The owner was taking a short-term view of his asset. He failed to recognize the loss of his capital, the top soil."

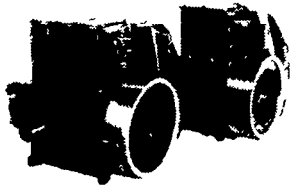
Property owners who rent their land for cropping can secure assistance in planning good conservation practices to enhance their capital asset by contacting the Chester County Conservation District, 235 W. Market St., West Chester, Pa. 19380 - phone: 696-5126.

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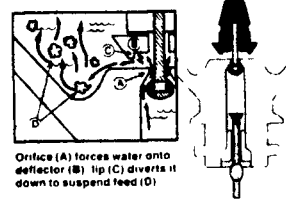
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