

NJ Farm Bureau plans Forestry Program

TRENTON — The New Jersey Farm Bureau has announced it is offering a Forestry Program to help woodlot owners better manage their woodlands and realize potential profits.

New Jersey has more than 1.8 million acres of woodland—with 1.5 million acres privately owned.

The New Jersey Farm Bureau decided to form its Forestry Program to fill a void created recently when the State Department of Environmental Protection abandoned its landowner assistance program during a realignment.

"The New Jersey Farm Bureau is the natural umbrella organization for a forestry program," said Walter Ellis, President of the New Jersey Farm Bureau. "Farmers are the caretakers and cultivators of the land; we have always tried to protect it."

Ellis said New Jersey's farmers

own tens of thousands of acres in woodland. During a recent survey, some farmers told the NJFB they did not have a management program and did not realize the potential monetary value of a well-managed woodlot.

The New Jersey Farm Bureau has hired Helen Hendrickson Heinrich to coordinate the Forestry Program. Ms. Heinrich, a certified landscape architect, has had involvement with woodlot management since 1978.

Under the NJFB program, a professional forester will visit an inquiring woodlot owner to determine the status of the acreage and its potential value.

If it is recommended that a management plan be implemented, a fee would be set—and then discounted for Farm Bureau members. Ms. Heinrich will provide the landowner with regular information on market trends, timber prices and industry

developments.

"Professional foresters tell us that much of the woodland in our northern counties is maturing and should be harvested before the trees become diseased, lose their value and endanger the future health of the woodlot," Ellis said. "Managing a woodlot does not necessarily mean harvesting trees for lumber. When harvesting is done properly, there is no sign of ravaging or destruction. Proper woodlot management is an art."

A forestry management plan involves making an inventory of the woodland, soils, wetlands and wildlife habitat. The plan, which is to be followed over the course of several years, identifies different stands by size and species, and outlines strategies for meeting the goals selected by the landowner.

"A management plan can enhance recreational opportunities such as hunting, fishing and hiking. It can add to the scenic

beauty and produce additional wildlife habitat," explained Ms. Heinrich. "Often, a buffer strip is left along a stream or road and it is only when you compare the 'before and after' areas that you realize what has been accomplished."

Ellis also noted that woodlands, in order to qualify for the state's Farmland Assessment property tax, will soon be required to have a professional forestry management plan.

The New Jersey Farm Bureau, which represents 4,851 members in the Garden State, is a service oriented, non-profit organization that lobbies for the voice of the farmer.

Ellis said private woodlot owners who are not members of the NJFB are welcome to inquire about the forestry program. Ms. Heinrich can be reached at state headquarters in Trenton at 609-393-7163.

PFU objects to FmHA's 'surplus' ruling on loans

WASHINGTON — In a letter to the Chief of the Farmers Home Administration's Directive Management Branch, the Pennsylvania Farmers Union filed formal objections to a proposed

Farmers Home Administration (FmHA) rule which would allow the farm "lender of last resort" to deny ownership or operating loans to producers of commodities which are in surplus.

The general farm organization's counsel, Cheryl L. Cook, Esq., described the effect such a rule would have on Pennsylvania's farmers. "If, for example, you compare the base milk production of family farmers in Pennsylvania with the production levels of corporate agribusinesses in California, you'll see that we're not primarily responsible for today's massive surpluses. Yet, our farmers would be hurt by this rule. The largest farms who are producing the most are not likely to be involved with FmHA, and would not be affected," she said.

"This rule would put family farmers in many commodities out of business without making a dent in the surplus problem. Aside from any question of whether FmHA has the authority to do something like this, the proposed rule is simply unfair," the family farm advocate said.

Cook pointed out that under the new Food Security Act, net farm income is likely to drop even lower for many farmers, leaving them with no choice but to increase production in order to cover costs. "The Food Security Act and the proposed FmHA rule would work in tandem to force a producer to expand and then deny him the means by which to do so," she said. "Farmers Union decided that we couldn't let this rule go unchallenged."

Pennsylvania Farmers Union represents family farmers in 31 counties throughout the Commonwealth.

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