

# Water Trough Keeps Soil From Washing Away

BY SALLY DUNMIRE

Special to Lancaster Farming

**LOCKPORT** — Soil and water conservation measures have been practiced on the Ammon's Oliver Township farm since the early 1870's when Robert Ammon's grandfather started farming.

Today's three generation farm family is carrying on that same tradition. For their outstanding efforts, the Ammons have been nominated for the 1986 National

Endowment for Soil and Water Conservation awards program.

This fourth annual awards program, sponsored by the endowment and the Dupont Corporation, picks a worthy farmer or rancher from each state. The original field is narrowed down to ten national finalists. From these finalists three national winners are named.

Many conservation improvements have been made over the years on the 330 acres of the

Ammons dairy farms.

The first subsurface drainage on at least three of the fields were dug by Robert's grandfather shortly after the original 98 acres were purchased. Ditches were excavated by hand and with the aid of horsepower, then stone was put in place. Many of these old systems are still draining land on the Ammons' farms.

Robert's father passed on the conservation efforts by teaching Robert to let sod strips and to skip waterways in areas where water drained away while plowing with draft horses.

William, Robert's son, partner and co-owner of a 77 Holstein milking herd, continues the same philosophy. According to William, "It really pays. A lot of our acreage wouldn't be tillable, probably 20 to 30 acres, without those drains."

The elder Ammon added "maybe up to 50 acres."

Other improvements include a conservation system, contour strips, no till corn, fall cover crop, and additional drainage pipe which includes two blind wells and a spring development.

This spring development transforms a hillside pasture from a nearby swamp to a usable grassland with an easily accessible drinking trough for the cows.

Gully erosion on this hillside was considerable in the past, however, the problem was corrected with the addition of the trough. They diverted the natural spring into a 1,000 gallon tank that drains into a concrete watering trough with a frost free hydrant.

Other conservation projects have been completed on other



The Ammons, (left) Michael, Robert and William, stand by their spring conservation project. With the installation of this 1,000 gallon watering trough, they were able to redirect the spring which had been causing serious erosion problems.



Prior to the installation of the trough, erosion was creating gulleys such as the one pictured here.

portions of their farm.

The Juniata river, which flows along the Ammons' fields, did considerable damage to the river banks during the 1972 flood. Since then they have replaced dirt and stone to the river banks, reclaiming what rampaging flood waters had washed away.

Part of the historic Pennsylvania canal and lock (hence the name Lockport) run between their fields and the river. A large gully "big enough to sit a car in" was repaired. The offending spring creating the gully, from the old canal to the river, was concrete tiled to prevent further damage.

Other plans being considered are

no-till legume seeding as well as the pro's and con's of a manure storage pit.

William's son, Michael, 16, plans to join his father and grandfather on the farm after graduation. "Conservation is a good idea," Michael commented.

Robert Ammon previously served as chairman of the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service county committee for 12 years.

Soil and water conservation is important to insure enough food and water for future generations. The Ammon family is a model of conservation practices in Mifflin County.

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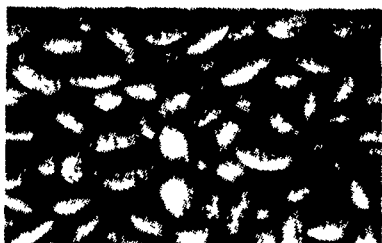
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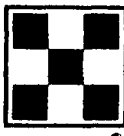
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Magnesium	Body Fluids
Manganese	Metabolism
Iodine	Thyroid
Selenium	Muscles
Sodium Chloride	Body Fluids
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Vitamin D	Bones
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Vitamin B12	Blood Metabolism
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Biotin	Metabolism
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