

Farm Preserve Sale 'Happening' Set for PP&L Property

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There is going to be a farm land auction in Lancaster County October 25. That in itself would not necessarily be front page news. But here we are talking about 640 acres, the largest tract of farm land in Pennsylvania ever put into ag preserve and then offered for sale. This tract of land is now divided into eight farms and will be offered for sale to the highest bidder.

This story started back in the 1960s when Pennsylvania Power and Light Company bought up a huge section of farm land and homes adjoining the Susquehanna River south of Columbia along River Road. They had plans to put up a power plant there and many of the area residents were uneasy as to what might eventually happen to this land.

But earlier this year, the Lancaster County Commissioners and PP&L jointly announced that PP&L had proposed to put deed restrictions on the land to keep it perpetually in farming before offering the land for sale back to farmers. That brought such exclamations as: "Hallelujah" from Amos Funk, well known ag land preservationist and "Exhilarating" from Commission Chairman James Huber.

At the time, the land was going to be sold by sealed bid. But later a new announcement was made that an auction would be used to sell the land and the firm of J. Omar Landis was selected to do the work. When this reporter visited the land Wednesday, contoured rows of tobacco as nice as you'll see anywhere graced the rolling country side. And nice ripened

ears of corn appeared when the husks were pulled down.

Most of the farm buildings are in disrepair. But the prospect of farming under the river's moderating effect on the climate and the deed restrictions to keep out development has many people speculating about how much the land will bring. While Jay Witman from the Landis firm was not willing to estimate a selling price on any of the farms, he did say he wouldn't be surprised if a 1,000 people showed up at the sale. Others are reported to be theorizing that because the tract of land is large enough to accommodate a settlement of Amish families, they will be likely bidders on sale day. In addition, a number of neighboring farmers may want to expand. Or because of the deed restrictions, a major livestock operator would be protected from urban neighbors who might complain about living next to this kind of operation. "I don't think there ever has been a farm land sale of this magnitude in one day," Witman said.

The parcels will be advertised starting October 1 at which time a presale office will be set up at the northeast corner of the intersection of River and Anchor Roads near the present David Funk residence. All of the land parcels will be sold the morning of Saturday, October 25, starting at 9:30 a.m. The approximate parcel sizes and acres are: 110, 104, 94, 75, 70, 69, 55, 45, and 13. After a lunch break, five houses on the PP&L property along River Road will be sold starting at 1:30 p.m. The auction firm is calling the event a "happening".



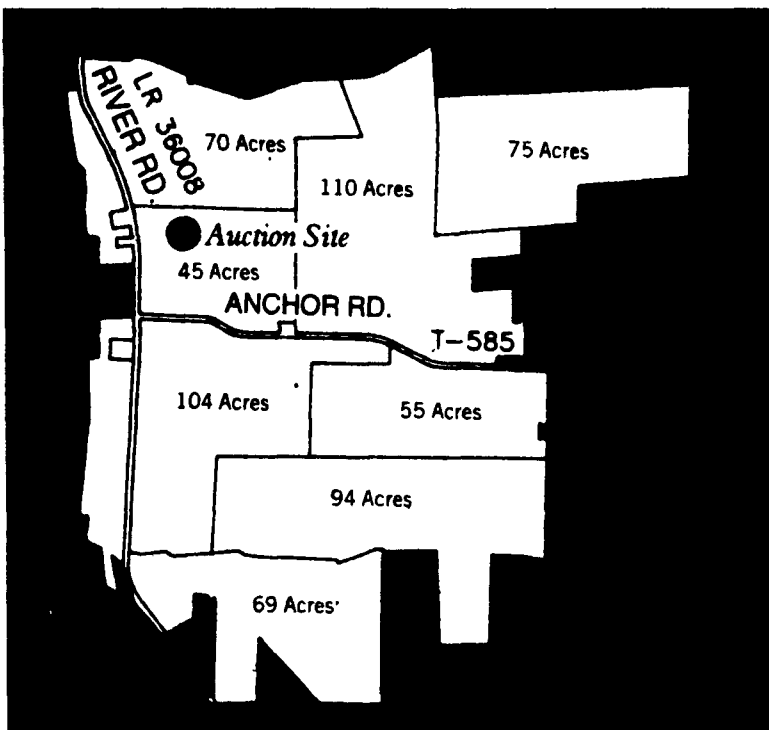
The corn looks nice. Two of the eight farms in the PP&L land sale can be seen in the background.



Tobacco in contour strips grace the fields in the Ag Land Preserve to be sold October 25.



Jay Witman and an associate from the J. Omar Landis Auction firm place the sale signs on Wednesday.



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