

## SCS Employees Define 'Wetlands' For Swampbuster Program

HARRISBURG — Farmers are being told that if they drain or farm a wetland, they will lose benefits from a large number of U.S. Department of Agriculture programs. The question many farmers are asking is, "what is a wetland?"

According to Robert Heidecker, a state resource conservationist with the USDA Soil Conservation Service, under the swampbuster

provision of the 1985 Farm Bill, USDA defines a wetland as soils that are covered with standing water or are water saturated most of the year, to the extent that they grow mostly water loving plants. "Both conditions, wet soils and wetlands plants, must exist for the land to be classed as a wetland," added Heidecker. The USDA Soil Conservation Service maintains lists of wet soils and water-loving

plants which make up a wetland designation.

Farmers who plant a crop on an existing wetland or on a wetland that was drained or filled since Dec. 23, 1985 will not be able to participate in most other USDA farm programs. This includes such USDA farm program as commodity price supports, Farmers Home Administration loans, crop insurance, CCC storage payments, farm storage facility loans and conservation reserve program annual payments. Heidecker reminded farmers that eligibility will be lost not only for the wetland that is cropped, but for the entire farm operation.

"Eligibility may be regained any year by not planting a crop on the converted wetland," added Heidecker.

Exceptions to the swampbuster

provision are (1) if the wetland was drained prior to December 23, 1985; (2) if the wetland results from an artificial condition, such as irrigation; (3) crops were planted on the wetland as a result of natural conditions such as drought; and (4) where SCS has determined that conversion would have a minimal effect on wetland values.

The swampbuster provision of the Food Security Act of 1985, commonly referred to as the 1985 Farm Bill, is aimed at discouraging the conversion of wetland to agricultural purposes. Many farmers have drained and planted wetlands to crops, under incentives offered through various

commodity support programs.

More than one-half of the wetlands that existed when America was settled are gone. Wetlands are some of our most diverse and productive habitat for waterfowl and wildlife. They help control floodwaters, recharge aquifers and provide many recreational and environmental opportunities.

For more information on Swampbuster, contact the local office of SCS or the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service. SCS conservationists can tell you if you have wetlands. ASCS personnel can provide information about the effects of Swampbuster on USDA assistance programs.

### United Severs Ties With NEDCO

SYRACUSE, N.Y. — United Dairy Cooperative Services Inc. announced that it has evolved as a new organization completely independent of Northeast Dairy Cooperative Federation Inc. This was a direct result of Chapter 11 bankruptcy proceedings.

United will continue its operation in Syracuse on the fifth floor of the Syracuse Building, 224 Harrison St. United is also buying the furniture and fixtures from NEDCO so the creditors and former NEDCO dairy farmer members will receive full value of all remaining assets. No impediment to court approval is anticipated.

United Dairy Cooperative Services Inc., a federated cooperative, currently has four member cooperatives: Mid-

dlebury Cooperative Milk Producers Association Inc., Otselec Valley Milk Producers Cooperative Association Inc., Progressive Dairymen's Cooperative Inc. and Syracuse Dairy Farmers Cooperative Inc. As a bargaining cooperative, United serves its members by providing economic and information services, educational programs, legislative review and representation, and striving to improve the farmer's market.

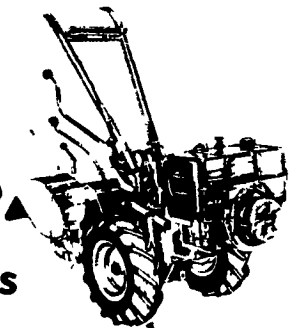
Serving as officers for United are President James Patsos, Waterloo; Secretary Glen Seeley, Syracuse; and Roland Schallenberg, Westernville. "We are extremely excited about this new venture," stated Patsos.

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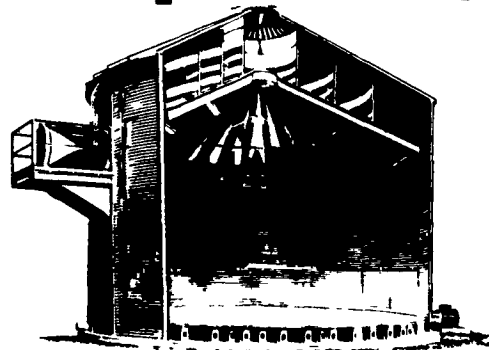
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