

# State Vote Yes

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part of the Department of Environmental Resources, in the mid 50s, I became acutely aware of Pennsylvania's diminishing farm and woodland. We were in a post-war economy. Things were booming and we were growing. They were exciting years for Pennsylvania. But, sadly, not enough thought nor planning went into those years of growth.

But, the farmers knew...and they were concerned. So concerned that throughout the 1960s and 70s, they pressed the General Assembly to recognize the need for conservatory techniques to save our valuable farmland. The General Assembly responded in passage of legislation to slow the erosion or the total loss of farmland.

But, farmland acres continue to disappear at an alarming rate, not just in Lancaster County but across the state. According to the Crop Reporting Services, United States Department of Agriculture more than 900,000 acres of Pennsylvania farmland were lost between 1975 and 1985. Some persons have questioned these figures, but they are the only reliable source available to us.

It doesn't matter if it's 700,000...900,000...or one million acres lost. The point is -- Pennsylvania is losing farmland that is almost impossible to replace. Driving down here today was a stark reminder to me about the importance of preserving farmland. The particular road, Route

283, that I was traveling came into being in my life time. It took several thousand acres of farmland to create that interstate, because for every mile of interstate it takes 60 acres of land.

Housing developments, shopping centers and other construction activities cover once valuable farmland. It's too late and in some cases too costly to save thousands of acres of farmland, but we have a golden opportunity to get a start in this process called farmland preservation.

Keith Eckel, president of the Pennsylvania Farmers' Association, said his organization has been working for this day since it adopted its farmland preservation policy in 1975. "Look around you," Eckel said, referring to the farmers bringing the fruits of the land to the market. "This is our heritage. But it's also our future. Speaking optimistically, Eckel continued, "When the referendum is approved, we will start a journey that will lead to a more prosperous agri business in the commwealth because we are starting the process of preserving our most important resource in Pennsylvania--farmland.

This program is a voluntary one. The farmer will not be forced to participate. The farmer will not be forced to shoulder the total financial burden if the local community decides to preserve farmland. Young farmers can plan their farming operations once the development rights are purchased. They are free to farm instead of worrying about how long the farm will be there.



At the kickoff of the Pennsylvania campaign to secure a yes vote for the nonbinding \$100 million farmland bond referendum are (L to R) Keith Eckel, president Pennsylvania Farmers' Association; Dr. Maurice Goddard, chairman State Vote "Yes" committee and state Senator Noah Wenger.

For all the citizens it is an effort to save our heritage, a way of life and our future production of quality food and fiber products.

Introducing the speakers and adding his support to the program was state Senator Noah Wenger (R) 36th Senatorial District. Wenger said, "We have been concerned in this area about the disappearance of agriculture for a long time. We in the legislature took action in 1981 that made provision to establish agricultural areas and then authorized counties to purchase development easements in those agricultural areas. That bill was passed with tremendous support, but we did not at that time provide any state funds to support our

actions. We knew at some time in the future this step would need to be taken so the program could reach its potential. This year we have the opportunity because there will be a question on the ballot, which will provide for state funds to go to the local county level to expand the program and assure a continuity of agriculture on our fine farms in Pennsylvania. It's an important step, and we hope it will be approved by the electret."

The referendum on the November 3, 1987, ballot will ask voters to approve the sale of state bonds to raise \$100 million for a farmland preservation program. If approved, the money will be used

to purchase agricultural conservation easements (development rights) from farmland owners. Once the development rights are purchased the farmland cannot be developed for a specific period of time.

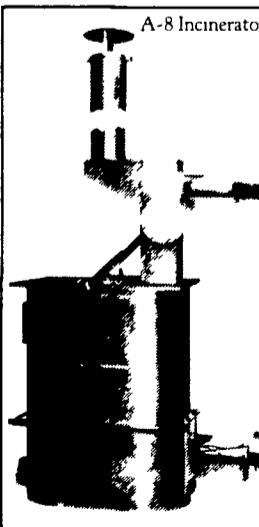
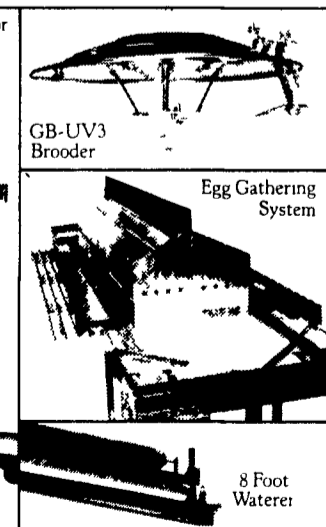
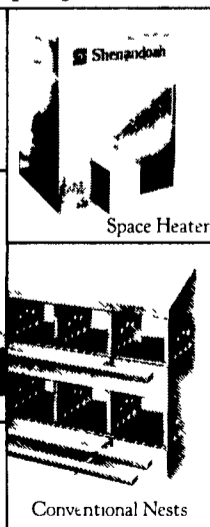



In concluding his remarks, Dr. Goddard said, "I personally have been associated with many major efforts to conserve and make use of our natural resources. Never in my professional life have I had a greater opportunity to preserve one of our most precious natural resources--farmland. Ladies and gentlemen, you need to vote "yes" on the Save Farmland Referendum at the November 3rd election," Goddard declared.

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