

# The Soil Conservationist With A Suitcase

When Larry Parvin pulls up at a farm in Blair County and gets out of the car with a suitcase, the farmer can relax. Parvin's not coming to stay. He is just bringing the latest in soil conservation technical assistance to the farm.

As district conservationist for the USDA Soil Conservation Service, Parvin is a welcome visitor on most farms in the county. He helps farmers develop conservation plans for controlling soil erosion, improving water quality and

increasing farm operation efficiency. And most of the time, he travels with a suitcase.

Parvin has equipped a standard two-suiter with a portable computer terminal, a disk drive, a printer, and an acoustical coupler.

The computer can operate alone at the farm or by using the farmer's phone, it can be hooked up to the larger computer in the SCS office. Out on the farm, it can be powered by rechargeable batteries, a car cigarette lighter or a standard household or barn electric outlet.

"This system allows me to take my office files with me to any farm," says Parvin. "The farmer and I can develop a conservation plan and the farmer can have his copy before I leave the farm. This saves the farmer time and it saves me time. I am averaging 4 to 5 hours per planning unit as compared to 7 to 10 hours before."

Parvin admits that the computer is not standard SCS equipment, but something that he developed. He points out that the computer is an easily obtained, relatively inexpensive 24K portable computer. Parvin has upgraded his computer to 96K storage.

According to Parvin, the port-

able computer is particularly valuable for developing contracts with farmers for an accelerated land treatment project in the Clover Creek Watershed. It is also used for field reviews of erosion and sediment control plans with land developers.

In the office, the portable com-

puter is used for word processing, preparing quarterly reports, time accounting and other office jobs.

Parvin said most farmers are impressed by the operation and appreciate the efficient service. A few, however, are wary. "I never get my suitcase out," he said, "until I get to know the farmers."



Larry Parvin, soil conservationist (L) and John Spitzer, SCS agronomist work with new suitcase computer.



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