

# Grassland FFA'ers

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students are studying how farming and non-farming activities affect the environment. Guided by Robert Lauffer, Grassland FFA advisor, this FFA chapter has undertaken many projects for improving water quality in local streams by implementing soil conservation and other practices to protect the environment.

As part of their Building Our American Communities (BOAC) Project, the environmental FFA chapter is working in cooperation with farmers Tom and Harold Wentzel on their farm near New Holland to make improvements in Black Creek. Coordinating the funding for this project, acquiring permits from local municipalities and gathering technical guidance from many organizations as well as conducting all the tests are the students' responsibility.

Recently these FFA'ers traveled nearly two hours south of their stream improvement project to the Chesapeake Bay. Since the Susquehanna River has such a vital impact on the Bay this field trip

was an extension to their local project. They were able to conduct the same tests on the Bay as they have done on Black Creek and compare the results.

Crossing the Susquehanna River at the point where it enters the Chesapeake Bay, these young environmentalists could see how the previous week of hard, heavy rains in the Lancaster County area influenced Bay conditions.

Where the two bodies met the water resembled a strong cup of coffee with extra cream rather than a body of water which had once been home to more species of aquatic life than any other body of water in the world. Silt and sediment carried from hundreds of miles upstream had turned the water to an unappetizing brown color.

Fields with little or no soil erosion controls in use and from areas of development where earth had been carelessly exposed and unprotected, had both become the victims of a week-long rain storm. Top soil from hundreds of miles upstream turned the water brown

as it flowed unchecked to choke life from the Bay. Named by the Indians to mean the Great Shellfish Bay, the only shellfish in abundance which still calls the Bay home is the crab.

Judy Olson, Educator from the Chesapeake Bay Foundation in Annapolis, noted that problems associated with manure runoff are as much a problem in the locality where it originates as it is in the Bay. She added that Lancaster County with its high density of livestock per acres of land, has as a whole has been very receptive to joining in the effort to save the Bay.

"It may be because farmers are so tied to the land and are more conscious of a land ethic that farmers as a group seem to be more understanding of the vital connection between watermen and life in the Bay. Farmers and watermen are very similar," said Olson. "Watermen depend on the water for their livelihood."

Almost everyday of the week, Olson conducts field trips on the Chesapeake Bay Foundation's work boat, aptly named the Susquehanna, which hosts mostly groups of students.

"When the kids see the water and the problems the Bay is having I think they begin to have a sense of appreciation for the animal life and the importance of protecting it," explained Olson.

"The important thing is to instill in them at an early age an environmental ethic. Learning now what

really is good for the environment and what isn't will make them understanding adults and more aware and sympathetic to environmental concerns," said Olson. "And that's important whether they are in Lancaster County, the Bay, or in California."



Donald Fair (front) Janetta Shirk and Tim Horst examine water quality results they ran during the Bay field trip. Grassland FFA students have focused their efforts to improve the water quality on Black Creek outside New Holland and are already experienced in testing procedures.

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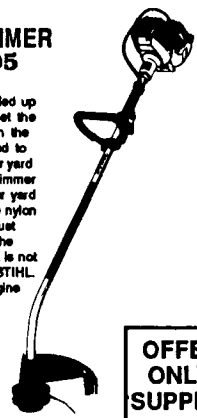
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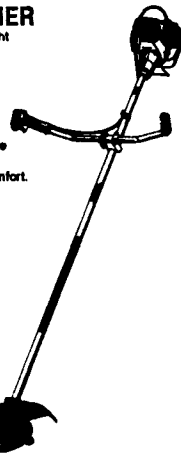
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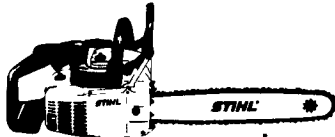
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