

## Eight Reasons For Getting A Conservation Plan Now

LEESPORT — If you plan to farm highly erodible cropland after December 31, 1989 and retain your eligibility for USDA benefits, there are at least eight good reasons why you should get your conservation plan prepared and approved as early this year as possible.

Robert Heidecker, state resource conservationist for the USDA Soil Conservation Service in Pennsylvania, said the Food Security Act of 1985 requires conservation plans for highly erodible cropland by the end of 1989 to maintain USDA farm program benefits. "What every farmer needs to realize is that they need to start actively applying the plan with the 1990 crop," Heidecker said. "You have until December 31, 1994 to complete the planned practices."

"Wait until January 1, 1990 or later to get a plan approved and you could find yourself having to get the entire plan completely installed before producing the next agricultural commodity crop and have USDA program benefits," added Heidecker. Since a

conservation plan usually takes five or more years to apply, the farmer could be without USDA program benefits for a period of time if he waits until 1990 or later to get his plan.

Heidecker explained these reasons for getting a conservation plan immediately: 1. USDA cost share assistance will probably become short during the early 1990s because of the demands created by recent planning. The sooner you get your plan and apply for cost share, the better.

2. If your plan calls for a crop rotation of high residue crops every few years, any such crops grown in 1989 in accordance with a plan, count as a part of your rotation for the same years. Wait until after December 31 to get your conservation plan and the crops you grow this year may not count.

3. If you lease or rent land to others or from others, both the tenant and the landlord need to know well in advance the conservation treatment needed for staying eligible for farm program benefits. If the needed treatments are expensive and the landlord is not willing

to pay part of the cost, some renters will not be farming that land after 1990.

4. If the practices needed are expensive, you might prefer to bid the land into the Conservation Reserve program. By putting the land in continuous grass or trees, an annual rental payment would be received from USDA for 10 years.

5. Serious soil erosion problems may require detailed engineering surveys before conservation treatment needs can be determined. Some of this expertise may be located in regional offices miles from the county. Scheduling of this type assistance is already backlogged in some counties. The longer that planning is delayed, the greater the prospect of further delays in the planning and application process. Farmers who wait until late 1989 will probably find it impossible to get assistance before the December 31, 1989 deadline.

6. If the plan you choose includes a crop rotation with a high residue crop for which you have no base acreage, you may

need to ask the local Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service office to let you exchange one base crop for another. The exchange could require the approval of more than one USDA agency, which can take several weeks. Farmers who wait lose again!

7. In some counties the Soil Conservation Service does not have enough personnel to handle the present workload. Those who wait until mid-summer will find many farmers ahead of them waiting for planning help. Farmers who do not get their plan prepared and approved before December 31, 1989, will probably lose at least one or two years of USDA program eligibility.

8. Conservation plans need to be approved by county conservation districts. Most districts meet once per month. Waiting past the November conservation district meeting is risky.

Under the sodbuster provision of the Act, farmers who plow out highly erodible grassland and plant it to a crop lose all program benefits unless the land is protected from excessive erosion the year the first crop is produced. Under swampbuster provisions, farmers lose the same benefits if they alter or plant wetlands to a crop.

At the present time, conservation planning is complete on 68 percent of the highly erodible cropland in Pennsylvania, states Heidecker. Out of 1.68 million acres of highly erodible cropland, plans have been prepared and approved for about one million acres.

If you are one of the farmers whose highly erodible cropland is not under a conservation plan, it is to your advantage to contact the USDA Soil Conservation Service office before Spring and request planning assistance.

## Goodling Schedules Hearing On Vocational Education

WASHINGTON, DC — Congressman Bill Goodling (PA-19) and Chairman Augustus Hawkins will lead the House of Representatives' Education and Labor Committee to southcentral Pennsylvania to hold a Congressional hearing on federal vocational education programs Monday, March 13, at 9:30 a.m. at the York Area Vocational Technical School.

"This hearing will give Congress an opportunity to hear from the people who deal with these programs on a daily basis and to learn more about vocational education in a real-life setting," Goodling said. "By holding the hearing in York, we are giving southcentral Pennsylvania a voice in federal voc-ed programs. This is an opportunity for local educators, businessmen and others interested in vocational education to tell us what's working, what isn't and what improvements they would like to see. They can help us restructure the program to best serve students and the workforce now and into the next decade."

During the hearings, members of the Education and Labor Committee will hear testimony from local educators, representatives of business and labor, and state and local officials. Afterwards, Committee members will tour York Vo-Tech.

"Vocational education is a vital opportunity for our students and a tremendous resource for our economy," Goodling noted. "American business can not afford to live in the past, and neither can American vocational education. Our voc-ed programs must keep pace with the realities of today's students and the demands of today's workplace."

Federal vocational education programs are aimed at providing funding and direction to the states in an effort to help them improve their vocational education programs and to help ensure access to quality programs for all individuals.

Goodling and Hawkins are Ranking Minority Member and Chairman, respectively, of the House Education and Labor Committee.

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