

Groundwater — A Local Issue

LEWISBURG (Union Co.) — Groundwater in Pennsylvania is a vast resource — a mysterious pool of water beneath our feet. Some people believe it is a technical subject beyond the understanding of ordinary citizens.

In the past it has been taken for granted by most people, but things have been happening in recent years that are drawing attention to the fact that we must do some things to protect it. A key question is — what should be done?

To answer that question and more about groundwater, the Penn State Cooperative Extension and the League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania have joined together in the Pennsylvania Groundwater Policy Education Project. The goal of the project is to focus on education and leadership development for ordinary citizens interested in groundwater. This will help them to participate in groundwater policy-making in Pennsylvania.

Recently, several conferences were held across the state to provide information on groundwater and on the tools available to protect it. They were designed to provide resources and training to enable citizens to more effectively participate in their home communities in public decisions affecting groundwater.

At those regional meetings, public policy alternatives and consequences were emphasized. Several hundred people attended the six conferences. They will be able to work with local leaders and officials in looking at groundwater situations in their home communities and develop ways that their groundwater can be protected. This will not be an easy task.

Most of the protection efforts

will relate to guiding and controlling land use, especially in the area of aquifers in a community. Aquifers are areas where water enters the ground and recharges the groundwater of the area. Most all land uses affect what happens to water in an area. The type of housing, its location, waste disposal, coal mining, gas and oil drilling, as well as agriculture of an area all have an impact on groundwater.

Prevention of contamination is one major solution as indicated in a publication prepared especially for the conferences. It states that since groundwater contamination is so difficult and costly to detect and clean up, the best approach to maintaining groundwater quality is to prevent contamination in the first place.

Several state and federal laws deal with some of the activities that can pollute groundwater. However, neither the state nor the federal government has any law specifically focused on management of the quality or quantity of groundwater.

Most regulatory programs that control potential sources of contamination of groundwater are the responsibility of the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Resources (DER). DER is developing a groundwater quality protection strategy to coordinate existing programs and provide the framework for further groundwater protection programs.

The strategy, as presently proposed, sets an ultimate goal of non-degradation of groundwater — that is, the goal is to protect and, where necessary and possible, improve existing groundwater quality. This strategy establishes groundwater protection principals

for existing DER permitting programs as well as procedures for cleanup and determining how "clean" is clean when contamination has occurred. The strategy also sets forth a groundwater monitoring program to track impacts of various potentially polluting activities on groundwater and describes a groundwater special protection program.

In addition, DER is developing a wellhead protection program to meet the requirements of the federal Safe Drinking Water Act. The purpose of this program will be to enhance local efforts to prevent contamination of recharge areas around public water supply wells and wellfields.

Since so many of the potential sources for groundwater contamination are related to local land use decisions, local governments and citizens have a vital role to play in protecting groundwater. Unfortunately, few communities to date have taken any steps to do so.

There are several reasons for this, including that it has become clear only fairly recently that land use and groundwater quality are connected. In addition, the cooperation between municipalities that is necessary when aquifers cross municipal boundaries may be difficult to achieve. Also, some protection programs require accurate technical data. And perhaps most significant, local officials have not been informed that they must or should enact policies to protect groundwater or even that groundwater needs to be protected.

Local protection programs can range from public education to change individual habits to land use controls to protect aquifers. Some possible protection prog-

rams are:

- Wellhead protection programs to protect the recharge areas for public water supply wells and wellfields
- Design standards for structures in the recharge area
- Operating standards for activities in the recharge area
- Septic system management districts to better control installation and maintenance of septic systems
- Education programs to assist homeowners and businesses in

making informed decisions about activities that impact groundwater

- Household hazardous waste collection programs to remove harmful substances from the waste stream
- Land use regulations to protect aquifer recharge areas
- Groundwater monitoring to determine water quality or movement of a contaminant plume
- Water conservation programs to reduce stress on septic systems and/or reduce contamination from saltwater intrusion in coastal areas.

Dairylea Sponsors Cooperator Seminar

SYRACUSE, N.Y. — Recognizing that developing leadership qualities in farm youths, and keeping them informed on dairy industry matters is vital to the future of agriculture, Dairylea Cooperative is sponsoring an educational seminar for its members' youths ages 12 and older.

On February 1-2, Dairylea's Young Cooperators will hold their annual seminar at the Sheraton Inn in Ithaca, N.Y. A highlight of the event will be a tour of Cornell University's dairy cattle, crop, and dairy products research facilities.

They will also have the opportunity to learn about public speaking and hear updates on the cooperative and the dairy industry by Dairylea President Clyde Rutherford and Chief Executive Officer Rick Smith.

In addition, the youths will attend a banquet where they will hear Mike Beckerink, president of the New York State Future Farmers of America, address youth leadership. Rounding out the event is free time for informal group discussions, games, dancing, and swimming.

MILK AMERICA'S HEALTH KICK

Questions Abound At Game Bird Conference

Herbert C. Jordan
Associate Professor
Poultry Science
Penn State

Several controversial issues will be confronted at the 22nd annual Pennsylvania Game Bird Conference at the Days Inn in State College on January 26-28.

Questions such as how to compute and analyze cost of production; pharmaceutical needs to be researched for pheasants and quail; how to stop early death of young pheasants before 28 days of age; how to stop the \$7 million annual loss nationally from hawks, owls, blackbirds, starlings, mammalian predators and health disorders; and how to manage cover to hold pheasants all year-round near your home will be addressed at the conference.

Participants need not preregister. A program can be obtained from any cooperative extension office or county agent, or by calling (814) 865-8301 or (814) 863-2116 and asking for a Game Bird Conference program.

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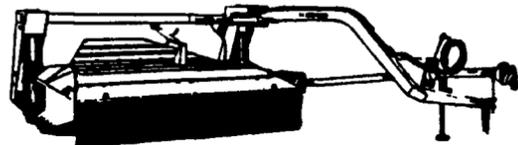
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