

Water Study Impacts Farmers

(Continued from Page A1)

Reed.

As a result of this barrage, sediment load at the dams which line the Susquehanna will reach a peak in 15-20 years. Right now, at one dam, there are about 23 million tons of soil, 32 million tons of coal, 49 million tons of silt, and 62 million tons of clay.

There may be upward of a billion pounds of nitrogen shored up at the dams, according to the hydrologist.

Extensive surveys

In all, the RCWP conducted extensive surveys with the 210 cooperating farms in the north Lancaster County region, with cooperation from 12 federal, state, and local agencies, according to Donald Unangst, U.S. Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service.

The project, begun in 1981 and ended in September 1991, was outlined in the July 13, 1991 issue of *Lancaster Farming*. It encompasses 110,000 acres, of which 1/2 area is cropland, according to Robert Heidecker, U.S. Soil Conservation Service (SCS). Approximately 63,000 acres are farmed, and include 65,000 cattle, 34,000 hogs, and three million chickens, for a total of 1.25 million tons of manure generated yearly.

Heidecker emphasized that the study was "not trying to point the fingers at farmers to say they are the only ones causing the problems in the area," he said. "There are other urban and suburban problems out there" the study needs to address, he said.

But Heidecker said that the study, which linked high rates of manure spreading and nitrates in ground and surface water, indicated some farmers were spreading 25 tons or more per acre, and



Robert Heidecker, USCS, spoke about the RCWP at a meeting in Lancaster last week.

some up to 40 tons per acre. Also, higher animal densities around barns and streams are causing a great deal of stream and other water pollution.

Problems ran into

Some of the problems the study ran into involved many of the farms that would not agree to long-term contracting with the agencies for study, including Plain and Amish sects, which make up more than half of the farms under study, according to Jeff Stoltzfus, project assistant. However, many nutrient management plans were eventually drawn up and put into effect, he said. Stoltzfus said that there was a great deal of voluntary participation by the farms surveyed, and

many of them paid for most of the conservation practices put into place.

Farmers should learn that a great deal of the feed purchased for the farm will end up as soil nutrients — about 70 percent of it. Only 30 percent gets converted to farm products, according to Leon Ressler, Lancaster nutrient management agent.

One of the lessons learned by the study is that farmers must adjust the nutrient needs of the crop with the amount of fertilizer available as one way to promote good nutrient management on the farm. Ressler said that burgeoning manure marketing attempts will help some farmers defray the heedless worries of "manure police" punishing them for not following good nutrient management practices.

In all, 175,000 people use the water in the study area, according to Jeff Mahood, SCS. And, of the 1,250 farms contacted, many "were not used to dealing with the government, let alone entering in a long-term contract with the government," said Mahood. But most of the farms, although apprehensive about the study, made an



Patricia Lietman, hydrologist with USGS, who helped set up the Morgantown RCWP testing site, explained that terracing, while preventing soil erosion, did not help increase the recharge of groundwater.

effort use "word of mouth" to spread information about the study. "These farms have a strong resource stewardship ethic," he said.

Not sign agreement
Aaron Stauffer, Ephrata, a cooperative farmer in the RCWP, said many of the Amish and Mennonite farmers in the study would not sign a long-term agreement with the agencies because they felt fear of getting in trouble for problems with possible runoff. Eventually, however, according to Stauffer, with the help of the conservation district, many of the farms signed on and have since benefited from doing so.

Patricia Lietman, USGS hydrologist who helped set up the Morgantown RCWP testing site, explained that terracing, while preventing soil erosion, did not help increase the recharge of groundwater. Also, nitrate levels in surface and groundwater actually increased after terracing. The site itself registered 12 to 17 milligrams/liter of nitrate — well above the DER permissible 10 milligrams/liter.

David Hall and Edward Koerle, both with USGS, also spoke about nutrient management of ground and surface water at the field sites. William Hunt, Pennsylvania deputy conservationist, SCS, concluded the meeting by emphasizing the importance of the tests. According to Hunt, the results should provide the means to make all farmers and agency personnel involved with the study "educational ambassadors."



A LESSON WELL LEARNED... LANCASTER FARMING'S CLASSIFIED ADS GET RESULTS!

ATTACH-MATIC

Hook-Up Your Wagon Tongue Automatically
Stay In The Drivers Seat With Attach-Matic
See It Demonstrated At Ag Progress Days
East 5th Street

QUIK-HITCH!

4000 BARREN RD.
OXFORD, PA 19363
1-800-55 HITCH

Agripac™

Alberta Ag-Industries Ltd.

SPECIAL FALL SALE ON 6', 7', 8', 9' & 10' Bags

Quality That's Guaranteed!

Special Fall Pricing on 7' & 8' Baggers

Get the Best for Less.

Your Profit Is In The Agripac™ Bag

✦ LOW CAPITAL INVESTMENT	✦ DURABLE AND DEPENDABLE	✦ ECONOMICAL
✦ EXCELLENT FEED	✦ VERSATILE AND ADAPTABLE	✦ FREE OF OXYGEN
✦ CONVENIENT STORAGE	✦ ENSURE ADEQUATE MOISTURE IN THE FORAGE	

Dealership Inquiries Welcome

ALBERTA AG-INDUSTRIES LTD.

P.O. Box 430, Brownstown, PA 17508 Lancaster Co. (717) 656-9919
Toll-Free 1-800-661-4150 FAX (717) 656-9909

See Us At
Ag Progress Days
Aug. 18-20 W. 6th St.
For Show Specials