

Pa. Second In Nation In Farmland Protection

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HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — Pennsylvania moved up to second place in the nation for the most acres of agricultural land preserved through the purchase of development easements.

Last week, the Pennsylvania Agricultural Land Preservation Board approved 26 easement purchases which makes the state second only to Maryland in total acres of farmland protected from residential, industrial and commercial development, according to the state Department of Agriculture (PDA).

The farmland preservation program was created because many organizations and government agency policies place agricultural uses for land as low-value, as compared to residential, industrial and commercial development.

These policies, which reflect inter-generational desires for capitalizing on short-term land use, do not take into account the long-term, or multi-generational benefits of land use.

Through the farmland preservation program, the general population permanently purchases development rights by using taxes and private donations. Under the program, current land owners are paid the difference between current assessed value per acre of agricultural land and the assessed value for the highest-value land use.

The program is overseen at the state level by a board of directors. It is initiated by landowners who must apply to a county level board and funding must also be shared at the county level. The county government holds title to the development easements.

Last week the state board approved easements for 26 farms in 15 counties. The total amount of prime agricultural land now permanently saved in Pennsylvania is 32,246 acres.

"The farms reviewed at today's meeting included a 1,000-acre farm in York County, and the first farm approved for easement purchase in Snyder County," said state Agriculture Secretary Boyd Wolff, in a news release. As secretary, Wolff is also chairman of the state ag preservation board.

"(Last week's) board action makes Pennsylvania second in the nation among efforts to save vanishing farmland. Only Maryland has protected more acres than we have."

Although not yet recognized by most government officials as a valid reason for seeking farmland protection easements, recent studies done by the Penn State University and other colleges have shown that agricultural land use is beneficial to communities for a variety of financial reasons, but mainly because tax revenues from agricultural land are higher than local expenditures to agricultural land.

According to Timothy Kelsey, assistant professor of agricultural economics in the Penn State University Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology, the result is that farmland is a long-term, tax-base benefit. It means that easement purchases can be expected to more than pay for themselves to the benefit of local communities.

On the other hand, while residential development generates more short term finances for individuals and government, residential land use has proven to be a constant drain of local funds.

The result is that land used for residential development hurts the local tax-service balance.

Similar to farmland, industrial and commercial zoning has been shown to provide a tax benefit to local communities, although it's not clear whether the price of long-term environmental cleanup associated with historic American industrial development actually is offset by the tax benefits to a community.

HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — Pennsylvania Farmers Union members from around the commonwealth converged on the state Capitol last week to take the general farm organization's priorities for legislative action to members of the agriculture committees and other key legislators.

"We gave legislators our entire policy statement for 1993, but spent most of our time during visits on a shorter statement of our seven top priority issue areas with a few specific ideas for legislative action in each area," said PFU President Robert C. Junk Jr.

The seven subject areas were commodity prices and farm income, fair trade, health care reform, tax reform, environmental concerns, game law reform, and youth involvement.

"We recognize that several of these priorities involve national, or even international, policies and programs," Junk said, "but there are still state-level impacts and things that can be done at the state level to help."

As an example, Junk said that a recent decision by an international dispute resolution panel found that several U.S. states bordering Canada were in violation of the U.S.-Canadian Free Trade Agreement because of their excise taxes on Canadian beer.

"The current language of the North American Free Trade Agreement does nothing to safe-

In a Penn State Extension publication authored by Kelsey, he stated that, "Some residents may not appreciate the smells, sounds, or other inconveniences of living near farms, but these (study) results suggest that all residents benefit from farm and open land."

"The property tax revenue from these lands helps keep residents' taxes low. Farm and open land in the case study townships, for

Farmers Union Seeks Legislative Remedies

guard the rights of states from some unelected, unaccountable international body," Junk said. "All it does is extend the current problem into Mexico," he added.

According to Junk, health care reform is another area in which state government should play a role, in spite of activities taking place at the national level.

"Of all of the states that have already passed health care reform bills, it seems that only Minnesota's law specifically addresses the special problems of rural citizens in getting better access to health care," Junk said.

"Our members asked legislators to include language similar to Minnesota's in any health care legislation that might pass in Pennsylvania," he said.

On the tax reform issue, Junk explained that Pennsylvania Farmers Union members believe that there simply has to be a fairer way to pay for schools than through property taxes, and that nearly every legislator had agreed.

"Our proposal is to allow localities to have up to half of their funding from property taxes, but to raise the rest through income taxes," Junk said.

The primary environmental issue raised by the group was the nutrient management bill, H.B. 100, which passed the House earlier this year and is expected to pass the Senate Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee later this

example, provided \$312,181 to their school districts. This is above and beyond the property taxes farmers paid on their buildings and homes.

"When farmland is converted to residential purposes, these benefits are lost.

"If the number of children in the new houses requires the school district to hire (additional) teachers or build (additional) schools, or the local government to increase ser-

vice expenditures, the impact of farmland loss can be especially dramatic.

"The land will be converted from a net contributor to the municipality and school district into a net drain."

For more information about farmland preservation, contact the state Department of Agriculture, local county government, or local extension office.

spring.

"We are comfortable with most of the provisions of the bill," Junk said. "The tough issue for us now," he added, "is to get enough funding for conservation districts and others to administer the program, and also for farmers to receive cost-share assistance in putting their plans to work."

Junk explained that, depending on the farm, compliance with a nutrient management plan could be relatively simple, but could also mean building expensive manure storage facilities.

In the area of game law reform, the farm group leader emphasized the need for hard numbers on crop damage caused by wildlife.

"Nearly every farmer has had to deal with the problem, but statewide financial loss totals aren't available, and that's made it harder to advocate for a statewide solution," Junk said.

AJCC Provides Youth Awards

REYNOLDSBURG, Ohio — In conjunction with its ongoing youth programs, The American Jersey Cattle Club sponsors awards for junior shows as well as for state, regional, and national judging contests.

Ribbons for three places in each

"It doesn't have to be complicated," he added. "Something as simple as moving doe season to cover the weekend after buck season would help, since most hunters wouldn't have to take any extra time off from work," he said.

Junk explained that the organization's youth involvement priority was aimed primarily at its own activities.

"Still, our hope for greater youth involvement in the Pennsylvania Farmers Union is a symptom of the need for greater youth involvement throughout agriculture. Young people have been understandably turning away from farming as a career, and it is showing up in our schools' vocational agriculture programs — where they still exist," Junk said.

The Pennsylvania Farmers Union is a general farm organization representing nearly 3,000 farm families throughout Pennsylvania.

individual female class and a rosette for the grand champion female are available for county, and district, state and regional junior Jersey shows. There is also an award presented in state and regional Jersey showmanship classes.

Awards available for the National Intercollegiate Dairy Cattle Judging Contest include a rotating trophy for the high team members and their coach. The high individual in Jersey judging is presented a model Jersey cow. Awards for the National 4-H Dairy Cattle Judging Contest are the same except there is no rotating trophy.

Awards for collegiate, 4-H and FFA regional contests at Eastern States, National Cattle Congress, Pennsylvania All American, North American, Pacific International, and Mid-South Fair include a laser-carved plaque for the coach of the high team in Jerseys and pen and pencil sets for team members. The high individual in Jerseys receives a model Jersey cow.

The coach of the high team in Jerseys at two-year and technical inter-collegiate contests receives a laser-carved plaque. Team members receive pen and pencil sets. The high individual in Jerseys is presented a color Ideal Jersey cow plaque.

At state judging contests, the high individual in Jerseys receives a color Ideal Jersey cow plaque. AJCC awards are available only by annual request. Other awards for significant achievements are also available upon request. Contact Gayle Starkey at The American Jersey Cattle Club, 6486 East Main Street, Reynoldsburg, Ohio 43068-2362, 614/861-3636, at least four weeks prior to the event.

Lebanon Gets Water Quality Funds

NORTH CORNWALL (Lebanon Co.) — Funds totaling \$46,800 have been made available under the 1993 Agricultural Conservation program (ACP) to implement conservation management practices in the Tulpehocken Creek Watershed, according to Jenifer K. Minnich, county execu-

tive director of the Lebanon County Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service.

"The Water Quality Incentive Project (WQIP) provides both technical and financial assistance for producers to change management systems to help solve resour-

ce problems associated with agricultural non-point source pollution adversely affecting water quality," Minnich said. The WQIP funds will be used to improve and protect water quality in the Tulpehocken Creek Watershed, she said.

To participate, farming operations must be contributing — or have the potential to contribute — through their current management system, agricultural non-point source pollutants such as agricultural chemicals, animal wastes, or sediments to surface or groundwater. "Incentive payments will only be available for management practices," Minnich said.

The Tulpehocken Creek Watershed Project covers a two-county area of about 43,300 acres.

"Agricultural producers in Lebanon and Berks Counties should be alert to this project," said ASCS official Minnich. "It is a good way to help solve a larger, community-wide problem and the incentive payments gives producers a good opportunity to participate."

Eligibility for participation in all programs administered by ASCS is on a nondiscriminatory basis as established under law without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, age, sex, marital status or disability.

Bull Test Sale Set

EATON, N.Y. — The 1992-1993 New York State Bull Test is now complete and the "cream of the crop" will be sold at 7:30 p.m. on April 23 at the Livestock Pavilion on the Cornell Campus in Ithaca. Thirty-eight bulls representing 10 breeds will be up for sale.

The sale will start with eight Polled Herefords, which will include the top indexing bull from Sapp Valley View Farm in West Virginia. This yearling bull indexed 113.7 and had an average daily gain of 5.03. Next to sell will be a Gelbvieh bull followed by two Charolais and four Shorthorns. The sale will continue with the Red Angus, Salers, and Hereford bulls. New to the sale this year is the RX-3 breed which has four bulls to sell. The sale will conclude with the four Simmental bulls and 10 Angus bulls.

This year's sale offers a wide

selection of some of the top yearling bulls in the Northeast. The bull test provides a program that allows beef producers to participate in a common test to evaluate the performance of bulls under similar, unbiased environmental conditions and an opportunity for purebred breeders and commercial producers to purchase these performance-tested bulls. The bull test is sponsored by the New York Beef Cattlemen's Association, Cornell Cooperative Extension, and the Cornell Department of Animal Science.

Those interested can preview the bulls at the Cornell Teaching and Research Center, Route 38, Harford, N.Y., (607) 844-8383. To receive a catalog, contact Jeanne White, sale chairperson, at (607) 838-3670.

Bulls may also be previewed at the Livestock Pavilion prior to the sale.