

Nutrient Management Advisory Board

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by Gov. Robert Casey, earlier this year, the State Conservation Commission has set deadlines to achieve a working program.

The goal is to have an up and running nutrient management program by July 1995.

The goals are divided into two distinct, but interrelated, lines of attack — one is to create nutrient management regulations; the other is to create nutrient management certification regulations.

The By July 1994, the commission is to propose regulations for both.

The final certification regulations are to be done in January 1995, while the final management regulations are to be done by July 1995.

In all cases, the advisory board is to review proposals of the commission and make recommendations.

During its previous meeting, the Nutrient Management Advisory Board sent back for revision a proposal for interim criteria.

The version discussed Wednesday reflected more the board's acceptance of wording to direct the department of agriculture to create a certification program.

The sentiments of the board, which approved the draft with a split vote by a show of hands, have been oft-expressed to create a program that does not make it overly difficult to achieve certifi-

cation as a nutrient management specialist.

The majority of the board said they felt that it can be expected that a certified nutrient management technician should understand deficiencies in a plan's control of nutrient flow; but at the same time, it should not be required that a nutrient management technician possess expertise in all fields relating to creating a workable nutrient management plan.

It was expressed that a certified nutrient management technician should be able to detect major deficiencies and then use the expertise of those already required to have such knowledge to arrive at a working plan.

It was also stressed that a working plan should achieve the goal of surface and groundwater protection from overnutrification, primarily by nitrogen, rather than merely create a bureaucracy by which compliance to regulation is more important than achieving control of nutrients.

In other business, George Robinson, representing the poultry and feed industry, said that a trip to the Netherlands taken by certain

members of the board and others to inspect and review nutrient management practices and concerns of that region was worthwhile.

He explained how the Netherlands government has instituted such things as a manure tax, which is based on an annual balance of export and import of nutrients onto a farming operation.

He also said that they have government subsidized manure shipping of up to 100 miles radius, and other programs aimed at curtailing a drinking water pollution problem.

However, Robinson noted that the area — being below sea level and maintained with ditches and dikes — is not generally comparable to farming practices in the United States.

The board also heard a review of meetings between representatives of agencies which are to eventually coordinate efforts under the Nutrient Management Act.

According to Vic Funk, on the staff of the State Conservation Commission, to date two meetings were held of the representatives of the primary agencies involved — Penn State Extension, the Pa.

Department of Agriculture, the Conservation Districts, the USDA Soil Conservation Service, and the USDA Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service. The most recent meeting was held Nov. 16.

Funk said the purpose of the meetings was bring together representatives of each agency and to "effect some coordination."

He said the agenda of the meeting was to get each agency up to speed with an understanding of its possible role in administering the Nutrient Management Act.

According to Funk, PSU Extension has been developing information for the public which consists of general explanations of the Nutrient Management Act.

The SCS is focusing on additional training, as were the others. The conservation districts, however, have some concerns.

Under the Act, each conservation district may or may not accept authority for implementation and enforcement of the Act, depending on the wishes of each board of directors for each conservation district.

Primarily, the obstacle to taking on full enforcement authority is either a lack of manpower, expertise, and/or a lack of financial

support.

For the past several years, at least, conservation districts — which are jointly funded by the federal, state and county governments — have sought increased state funding in order to carry out an increasing amount of responsibility, such as some districts perform in reviewing construction plans for residential or commercial projects, working with the Chesapeake Bay program, environmental education efforts, and attempting to monitor earth-moving activities and erosion control.

Funk said that as a result of the meeting it was also determined that there must be some system of post-coordination; in other words, after the regulations are in place, some forum for interagency coordination must evolve.

"We must sing out of the same hymnal or have a lot of confusion," Funk said.

He said that PSU Extension representatives have said the agency plans a continuing education program supporting the nutrient management act, similar to its existing continuing education in support of the state's pesticide application laws.

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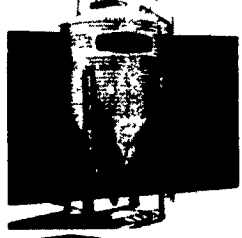
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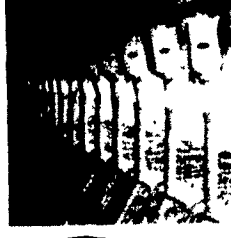
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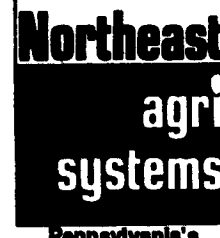
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