

New Conservation Technicians, New Programs In Lancaster

ANDY ANDREWS
Lancaster Farming Staff
LANCASTER (Lancaster Co.)

— In a move to provide more efficiency and better service for farmers in the county conservation district, three new conservation technicians were recently hired. Also, the new technicians have distinct and separate responsibilities according to township.

The new technicians include:

• James A. Shirk. His region of responsibility includes the northeastern to north central part of the county. A recent graduate of Penn State, Shirk will be responsible for cooperating farms in the following townships: Brecknock, Caermarvon, Clay, Earl, East Cocalico, East Earl, East Lampeter, Elizabeth, Ephrata, Leacock, Manheim, Paradise, Salisbury, Strasburg, Upper Leacock, Warwick, West Cocalico, West Earl, and West Lampeter.

• James R. Saltsman. Saltsman worked for 3½ years as technician with the Chester County Conservation District, and for some time in Montgomery County. Saltsman is a 1987 graduate of Houghton College. Saltsman's region of responsibility includes the central to southern-southeastern sections of the county. He will be responsible for cooperating farms in the following townships: Bart, Colerain, Conestoga, Drumore, East Drumore, Eden, Fulton, Lancaster, Little Britain, Manor, Martic, Pequea, Providence, and Sadsbury.

• Travis L. Martin. Martin worked for the Soil Conservation Service in Chester County for two years, primarily with the Hybernia Park water supply system. His responsibility will be the western

part of the county. A 1991 graduate of Shippensburg University, Martin will be responsible for the cooperating farms in the following townships: Conoy, East Donegal, East Hempfield, Mount Joy, Penn, Rapho, West Donegal, and West Hempfield.

While each township will be assigned to the designated technician, the new technicians will share responsibilities for carrying out the directives of the overall Chesapeake Bay program, administered by the district.

"We're going to be held responsible for the different parts of the county," said Martin. "But we're working as a team, so if someone needs help, we're going in to help."

Right now, status reviews are under way in the district.

"With each Bay contract, we will return to (the farms), ask the farmer how it's going, and make sure the practices are still in operation," said Shirk. He said the technicians will look at the nutrient management plans to see if they're up to date and being implemented correctly.

"We want to see if the program is working for them," said Saltsman. "If it isn't, we want to modify it to correct the problems. We don't want to mess up their operation, we want to enhance their operation so it both helps them to make a living at farming and helps save their resource, which is their soil."

Don Robinson, district administrator, said the conservation district will continue to write nutrient management plans for farmers "as we have always written them." The regulations are now being drawn since the nutrient manage-



Three new conservation technicians in Lancaster include, from left, Travis Martin, James Saltsman, and James Shirk.

ment law was enacted, and part of the plan is to make those regulations known to cooperating farmers.

"I think our nutrient management plans are going to be setting the pace for the rest of the state," said Robinson.

With the new stream bank fencing program (see related article) in place, now farmers can save a great deal of money in improving water quality. The technicians are there to help.

The new program, which now is administered by the district, installs stream bank fencing free to farmers. Where it used to be available through the Pennsylvania Game Commission (allowing hunters to use the land), the new prog-

ram allows farmers to put up the fence and still restrict those who come upon it.

The fencing program is "an inexpensive way of improving water quality," said Shirk.

Stream Bank Fencing Available Free

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— Before now, farmers had to allow hunters on their land to benefit from free stream bank fencing. But a new program allows the free fencing to go in without those provisions.

The new Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Resources (DER) stream bank fencing prog-

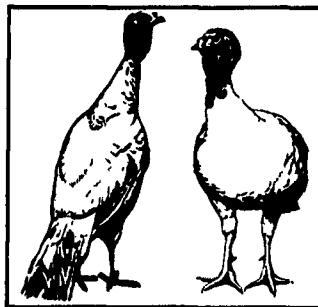
ram is available free to farmers within the entire Chesapeake Bay drainage area (see illustration). Farmers can receive 100 percent of all the costs of fencing, energizers, and crossings.

According to Don Robinson, Lancaster County Conservation District administrator, all farms in Lancaster can qualify for free stream bank fencing. The only requirement is to maintain the fencing after it is installed.

"It's an inexpensive way of improving water quality," said James Shirk, conservation technician, who oversees the north central to northeast part of the county. He said the program will show real improvements in water quality.

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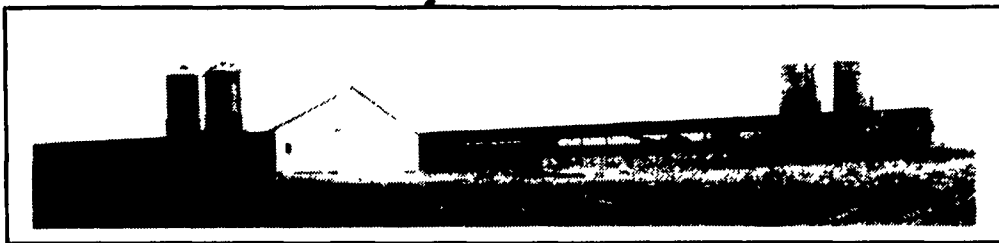
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