

State Forms Aquaculture Oversee Committee

HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — The Department of Agriculture hosted a meeting recently to establish state guidelines for preventing depredation of fish by wild birds. Wild birds are a serious economic threat to aquaculture, a \$12 million segment of Pennsylvania's agricultural industry.

Addressing concerns by the state's fish farmers, a committee was formed to establish a state-wide policy for the timely issuance of nuisance bird kill permits.

These permits would authorize fish producers to eliminate individual birds that don't respond to any other control methods. Most fish producers are already using scare tactics such as noise devices, expensive netting, structural barriers and/or electric fencing.

The new committee includes one representative from the Fish Commission and three from the Game Commission, along with two fish farmers and the Department's aquaculture coordinator. Their recommendations will be finalized in May.

About one-third of Pennsylvania's 153 fish farms are located on major flyways or near major nesting sites. These producers experience frequent problems with black crown night herons, great blue herons and sea gulls, who can easily consume their body weight in fish each day. This can amount to as much as 40 percent of the fingerlings stocked by a farmer each spring.

In addition to providing fresh

fish for the dinner table, Pennsylvania's aquaculture industry produces fish for recreational fishing, research, home aquariums and garden ponds.

Depredation is not unique to aquaculture. Many farmers have their corn crop or grain fields wiped out by grazing deer and geese. Airports and community parks are also plagued with nuisance duck and geese.

Aquaculture Advisory Board Meets

The Aquaculture Advisory Board has asked the Department of Agriculture to develop fish health policies for the state and the mid-Atlantic region, during their bi-annual meeting.

The request is a result of the problems producers face in shipping fish into the New England states since the introduction of the New England salmonid health policy, which curtailed almost all sales from Pennsylvania.

The advisory board was given an overview of the Chesapeake Bay Policy for the Introduction of Non-Indigenous Species, signed by the governors of the signatory states in the tributary watersheds of the bay last December. This policy would determine what new species of fish may be cultured in the future.

It was also announced that the Pennsylvania Aquaculture Association is offering 4-H and FFA students an opportunity to raise fish for summer projects and sell them to the association in the fall for their commodity booth during

the State Farm Show in January.

This would include hybrid striped bass, tilapia, trout and catfish produced in cage culture or recirculating systems, provided

they meet PAA health and quality guidelines. About 35 schools have recirculating systems now that would qualify.

For more information about either of the aquaculture meetings, contact Leo Dunn in the Bureau of Ag Development at 717-783-8462.

Farmer's Market Begins Season With Bedding Plant Auctions

CHELTENHAM, Md. — The Southern Maryland Regional Farmer's Market (SMRFM) is gearing up to begin the 1994 season.

The market will hold its first auction of the season on Friday, April 22, at 11 a.m.

The wholesale auction will feature bedding plants and early spring crops such as spring onions

primarily from the southern Maryland area. Additional auctions will be held on Friday, May 6 and May 20 at 11 a.m.

According to Chairman Russell Shlagel, wholesale bedding plant auctions were held at the market for the first time last season.

"Bedding plants are another alternative for tobacco growers

trying to diversify," said Shlagel. "The SMRFM is continually striving to offer growers as many opportunities as possible to sale alternative crops".

Growers and wholesale buyers interested in participating in the wholesale bedding plant auctions should call (800) 533-3276.

Forest Insect Pest Meeting Set

WARREN (Warren Co.) — An important educational meeting to better inform landowners about the elm spanworm and fall cankerworm threats to woodlots and community trees has been scheduled for Thursday, April 28 at the Mercyhurst Smith Educational Center in Corry.

The meeting will take place from 7:30-8:30 p.m., and it is open to the public. It is sponsored by the Pennsylvania Bureau of Forestry and Eric County Penn State Cooperative Extension. Preregistration is not required.

Norm Kauffman, entomologist with the Pennsylvania Bureau of Forestry, will be the main speaker.

He will explain the history and biology of these pests and will outline the recommended control practices for homeowners and woodland owners alike.

According to Don Wary, district forester with the Pennsylvania Bureau of Forestry, "These insect pests have the potential to cause some serious economic damage this year. The public should be better informed to protect their woodlots and trees from defoliation."

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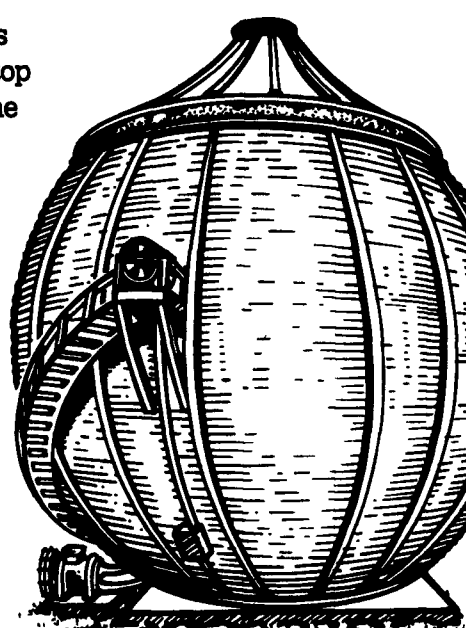
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