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related farm plans into one operational plan.

In the past, and still to a degree today, governmental agencies concerned with agriculture do not have a system of standard cooperation.

As a result, different agencies can and have required conflicting things of farming operators.

The One-Plan Concept is an effort to literally bring all the agencies onto the same sheet of paper.

The most recent signator was the USDA Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service, joining in the multi-governmental effort on April 12. Other organizations had signed the interagency memorandum of understanding last year.

Conservation Plan Review

Joel Myers, state agronomist with the SCS, told the group that conservation plans, free to cooperators, and fulfilled according to a list of priorities, are "umbrella" plans which seek to incorporate agricultural waste, nutrient management, pesticide use, and controlling sheet rill and gully erosion.

Nutrient management plans as they currently exist, are deemed worthwhile in that they address a specific concern. However, those plans hold no legal authority and their use is not connected, nor does it restrict, the work of the State Conservation Commission in its work to implement the agricultural requirements of the Nutrient Management Act.

Myers' presentation was allowed because members wanted to learn specifics of how these existing plans are made and carried out, in order to consider the role of an eventual authorized and approved nutrient management plan.

Some implications of Myers' presentation was that soil and erosion control planning is more or less a necessity in determining nutrient planning on a farming operation, whereas discussions to date about those who may be required to approve or develop official nutrient management plans have not, as of yet, included mandating expertise in soil and erosion control.

One-Plan Concept

Barry Frantz, program coordinator of the One-Plan Concept, is actually an employee of SCS who

is on loan to the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts (PACD). The PACD is the hub group behind the One-Plan effort.

Frantz said that he has been involved with 22 of the conservation districts in the state (there are 67 counties and only slightly fewer conservation districts) in the initial year.

He said that the goal of the effort is to bring together all concerned with the operation of a farm, to create a mutually agreeable, integrated plan of operation.

"There is a difference between resolving conflicts and integrating plans," Frantz said.

He was referring to the fact that resolving conflicts doesn't necessarily mean that priority is given to optimum results. In other terms, it's comparable to making alterations to a piece of equipment to make it useful, even though the original equipment wasn't designed specifically for the new purpose.

On the other hand, creating an integrated plan has to revolve around the farmer, his resources and his goals, according to Frantz. Or, in other terms, it means building a piece of machinery specifi-

cally for a job, using available technology.

Frantz said there is a lot of confusion about the one-plan concept. He said he has received comments from people that they don't need another plan, they already have five or six.

However, Frantz said that the reality of integrating plans on a farm is that time is of essence. He said that it can take up to a year to get a specific problem resolved, because of the need to have all the people involved review and discuss the problem from their perspective and area of expertise.

"We are not trying to create a situation with one planner for one plan," he said. "There are too many details and work for people to go too far from their area expertise," he said.

According to Frantz, the One-Plan Concept uses the farmer as the core decision-maker and the rest act in consultation.

"The farmer decides what goes in. He looks at all the angles," he said.

The quickness of making decisions depends on the quickness in which a problem is identified, understood and possible solutions can be presented.

Frantz said that because of the

ongoing farm activities and the seasonality of the work, farm planning can probably be considered to be a seasonal activity.

For example, with soil moisture only becoming appropriate for field work during the past two weeks, he said that he can not schedule meetings now between consultants and farmers.

He said that this situation generally occurs during planting season and again during harvest season, depending on the type of farming operation.

Again, the implication is that there may be some timing problems with implementation of nutrient management plans, if there are significant numbers of plans submitted for approval. Though it is doubtful that a great many plans will be submitted at once.

Those presentations seemed to make clear that there may be a need for some guarantee of interagency cooperation in determining acceptable soil and erosion control practices, because it is so closely tied to the control of flow of nutrients on a farm.

However, it was also pointed out that those for whom mandatory nutrient planning was conceived are not the normal operators, but high-density operations, characterized generally by higher levels of organization.

Although not specifically said, the gist of the discussion was that those types of organizations, for whom the law was created, can and should be willing to conduct a proper nutrient management plan, including soil and erosion control, even if they can't get the work done for free by the SCS.

Certification Underway Educational Efforts Need Support

Further discussions about educational efforts by Penn State University Extension, which was given that responsibility under the Nutrient Management Act, resulted in the board approving a recommendation that funding be provided for the development of an instructional video for use in educating conservation districts and extension agents in nutrient management.

According to Dr. Douglas Beegle, the video would help provide a common base understanding to a wide audience without having to tie up the schedule and travel expenses of experts who would otherwise have to tour the state giving meetings. Further, weather and attendance would not be as much of a problem with people learning about the program through a well-produced instructional video.

As far developing specific educational programs in support of the criteria for attaining recognition as a nutrient management technician, Beegle said that the university can not develop and educational program until it is known what is to be taught.

It can not be known what is to be taught until those developing criteria and regulations have completed their jobs.

In the meantime, John Longenecker, director of the PDA Bureau of Plant Industry, who has been working to develop a program for certifying nutrient management specialists, said that work is underway on developing final criteria and that he will have a proposal before the board within the next two months.

While it was questioned how Longenecker could develop and get approval for a certification program prior to the actual finalization of regulations, he said that using the current pesticide certification program as a template, as was indicated during the formation of the law, and using the information garnered from the commission and advisory board, he will be able to have a program that can test demonstrated competency by July 1995.

Longenecker provided an update on the applications for interim certification, which is really pre-certification and makes those accepted eligible for training for final certification. The goal is to create a number of technicians who can begin to develop approved plans next year.

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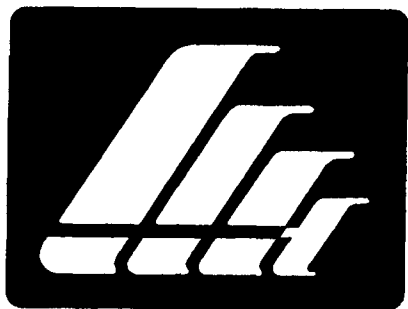
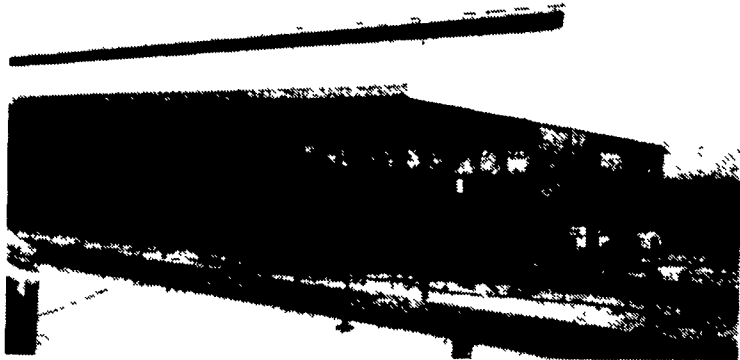
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