

Tom Ridge will take an axe to DER

Guess who's copying his master plan.



Tom Ridge, Republican candidate for governor, promises rural voters a new DER that will be "a partner of farmers rather than prosecutor".

Tom Ridge, Republican candidate for governor, has been hammering at DER's gross mismanagement and bully boy tactics since June 18, 1993 when he originally announced plans to revamp DER.

First and foremost, said Ridge at the time, is the need to split DER into two smaller, more responsive departments.

So guess who stole a page out of the Ridge master plan at this late date? You got it. His opponent, Mark Singel.

The Lieutenant Governor also wants to break up DER, he told farm reporters at Ag Progress Days. But Singel didn't seem to have the first clue on the how or where. Not even after 14 months of studying the Ridge proposals.

As Singel explained it to the farm press, "We are taking a look at moving the (resource) development aspects (of DER) into different realm, whether into the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Commerce or somewhere else, remains to be

seen". His old pal Bill Clinton couldn't have said it better.

Tom Ridge has no such doubts about overhauling DER. Never did. Here's the time table for his first week as governor:

Speed up permits. On day one as governor Ridge will issue an executive order to turbocharge the DER permit process. "We shouldn't make farmers wait months before using their land," Ridge says.

Seek farmer advice. Ridge also will order DER to involve farmers and others in decision making before regulations are written. Result: fairer, more workable regs.

Downsize DER. During week one, Governor Ridge will work closely with legislative leaders to split DER into two departments. One to handle environmental protection, the other to oversee state parks and forests.

"We can protect the environment without crippling the farmer's ability to compete," Ridge insists.

Count on it.

Ag Coalition for RIDGE/SCHWEIKER

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