



OPINION

To Stay In Farming, Sign Up

Act 319, commonly called Clean and Green, has come into play all across Pennsylvania where local governments have reassessed agricultural land. Usually, these reassessment values are based on what the land is worth for development rather than the value based on what the land will produce for agricultural purposes.

This week, reassessment notices have been mailed in Lancaster County. And as one local reporter wrote, "farmers panicked." Not only did they receive word that their reassessments had increased farm values by "sometimes staggering amounts," the deadline to apply for Clean and Green relief was set for June 1. This gave farmers about two weeks right in the middle of spring planting to make decisions that can have eternal consequences for the future of the farm.

Due to the work of Jane Balmer, Lancaster County Farm Bureau president, several precedents were found to extend the June 1 application deadline. Susquehanna County Commissioners in 1993 successfully petitioned the courts for a deadline extension for the Clean and Green Act. Centre County later succeeded in the same type of petition. So the stage is set in Lancaster County court at 9 a.m. Monday for the same type of extension. We hope this will happen.

The Clean and Green Act does give production farmers a more realistic tax burden in relation to farm income. If you have 10 acres or produce more than \$2,000 worth of agricultural products, you likely should apply for the relief. It's true, if you want to change the use of the farm later, the would-have-been taxes at the development rates will need to be paid for the last seven years, along with six percent interest. The difference between the Clean and Green value of the best ag land in Lancaster County of \$1,220 and the \$4,000 to \$6,000 or higher value of land for development would not likely keep a developer from buying the farm. But it is a pile of money that will need to be considered.

As for the story going around that in the Clean and Green you must allow the public on your property at will, we have clarified this fear to our satisfaction. There are three classifications of land that can be placed under the Clean and Green Act as follows: (A.) production agricultural land as defined above; (B.) land that has the capability of being farmed but is not in active production; and (C.) forest reserve areas for the growth of trees.

According to John Bell, Pennsylvania Farm Bureau's legal representative, only the "B" category (land that has the capability of being farmed but is not in active production) would need to be opened to the public under the Clean and Green Act.

On another note, in Lancaster County the best soils in Clean and Green are assessed at \$1,220 per acre and in neighboring counties the same soil type is assessed at less than half this value. Because of this fact, there may be legal grounds to contest Lancaster County's assessed per acre value. Maybe if a farmer would have been part of the assessment committee, we could have avoided this glaring discrepancy.

Even so, the reassessment value of your farm is only half of the equation. Reassessment by law may not increase the county's total tax take by more than five percent in the first year. The main feature of reassessment is to redistribute taxes according to the market value of each of the properties in the county. So the reduced millage rates will really determine your new total tax bill. Some property owners will pay less in taxes under the new reassessment.

But if you consider everything, and you plan to stay in the business of farming for some time into the future, you will likely need sign up for Clean and Green.

Now Is The Time
By John Schwartz
Lancaster County Agricultural Agent

To Harvest High Quality Alfalfa

High quality alfalfa is valuable in the ration of high-producing cows. However, there is more to quality than just the protein content of the feed.

Cows also need a certain amount of effective fiber for the rumen to function normally. Early bud and pre-bud alfalfa is high in protein but deficient in fiber. In the bloom stage, protein levels decline and fiber levels increase. When alfalfa is beyond the early bloom stage, fiber levels become high enough to the point where they start to reduce digestibility and dry matter intakes.

In view of this, the optimum time to harvest alfalfa is around the late bud stage. However, in spring you may not have good drying conditions at that precise stage of maturity. In that case, a better guideline might be to cut the crop in May at the beginning of a predicated break in the weather regardless of stage of maturity — even if you have to let the corn planter sit idle for a few days. It may be the only good break in weather you receive for the next few weeks. Thus, you will enjoy knowing that you harvested the first cutting at a young stage of maturity, hopefully without a lot of rain damage, and the second cutting is growing as you finish your corn planting. In the meantime, you have set yourself up for an extra cutting for the season.

Remember, if the first cutting was removed at a very young stage of maturity, the next cutting should come into bloom in order to maintain the vigor of the stand.

To Control Prickly Redroot

Many farmers are experiencing a preponderance of prickly redroots in their pastures and sacrifice lots.

According to Glenn Shirk, extension dairy agent, one way to control this pesky weed — along with some other bothersome weeds such as thistles, horsenee-

Seminar, Penn Manor High School Auditorium, 8 p.m.-10 p.m.

Clean and Green dropoff meeting, Strasburg Municipal Building, 10 a.m.-3 p.m.

Lehigh Valley Horse Council meeting, Alista B. Arabians, Germansville, 7:30 p.m.

Tuesday, May 23
Lancaster County Plastic Pesticide Container Recycling Program, Martin's Ag Service, 8:30 a.m.-11:30 a.m., also June 20, Aug. 22, and Sept. 19.

Lancaster County Plastic Pesticide Container Recycling Program, (Turn to Page A30)

bles, buttercups, etc. — is to apply a herbicide such as Ally in late spring to early summer.

Ally will also kill legumes. However, the legumes may be re-established a year later after the weeds are under control and the herbicide residue is gone.

As always, when applying pesticides, read the label and follow all instructions including weeds and crops the pesticide is labeled for, withdrawal times, and personal protective clothing required.

To Run Productive Meetings

Every week I attend more meetings than I care to count. Many are very productive while a few leave something to be desired.

I have learned to keep meetings productive. Organizers should keep meetings on a fast track, leaving time for group interaction. This helps to develop understanding and builds support for what will need to be done after the meeting is over.

Some ideas on how to get more

done per meeting minute:

- Prepare a written agenda. Distributing an agenda in advance gives people time to prepare for the meeting. Also, an agenda helps you set a time table for the meeting.

- Follow the agenda. Check off the items as they are completed. Note comments and ideas.

- Start and stop on time. Starting on time is a simple courtesy to those who are punctual. It also gives full amount of time to the agenda. Finishing on time takes discipline. An agenda and firm ending time keeps the meeting moving and productive.

- Discourage repetition of comments. Reach consensus and move on to another point.

- Generate clear outcomes and assignments. At the end of the meeting, review tasks identified by the group and make assignments to people to work on these tasks.

Feather Prof.'s Footnote: "Do not wait for extraordinary opportunities. Seize common occasions and make them great."

THE BIBLE SPEAKS
BY LAWRENCE W. ALTHOUSE
THE REAL REASON WE DON'T SHARE
May 21, 1995

The Real Reason We Don't Share

May 21, 1995
Background Scripture: II Corinthians 8 through 9
Devotional Reading: Matthew 25:31-41

I have frequently deluded myself that I would be happy to share more with others if I had more. It is a harmless exercise because there is not the remotest chance of such a windfall. So, satisfied that I would be heroically generous, I get a lot of satisfaction over what I would do if circumstances were to change.

But then Paul persuades me that abundance of giving is not tied to the abundance of having. He points to the Macedonians, "for in a severe test of affliction their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of liberality on their part." The Macedonians could have claimed exemption from the collection: they were poor and in affliction. Nevertheless, they managed "a wealth of liberality" that overflowed. Not only did they give generously, but they had begged Paul "earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints" (8:4).

So their exemplary example was not in their means, but in themselves. Their concern for others flowed out of their "abundance of joy" that prevailed despite their circumstances. Their situation did not have to change before they could be generous. And neither does ours!

First, Themselves

So, if we are not limited by our means, why are we not more generous? First, we do not give of our means because we do not actually commit ourselves to Christ. We tend to forget that, basically, what Christ wants of us is not votes of memberships, but discipleship, living as he did. "First they gave themselves..."

The second reason is that we don't really have faith in God. The failure to share is really a failure to trust in God. We do not share more, because we believe we do not have enough to share. That is

really a denial of what God has already done for us. The Macedonians had comparatively little, but they rejoiced over what they did have, an "abundance of joy." By comparison, the Corinthians had considerably more, but failing to recognize and appreciate their abundance, they didn't have the joy.

Joy is what God provides for us makes all the difference in the quality of our lives. A study of Japanese men with cancer found that those who were thankful for the time they had left had better chances for survival than those disturbed over the time that was gone. To accept God's gifts without thankful joy is the greatest poverty of all.

Enough and More

Holding back in sharing also means that we don't trust God to provide for us. Giving, says Paul, is accompanied by a promise: "And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that you may always have enough of everything and may provide in abundance for every good work" (9:8). Although nagged by the fear that we won't have enough, he assures us: "He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your resources..." (9:10).

If we believe this promise, how can we not share with those in need? We don't have to wait for better circumstances. We can give generously now and trust God to supply us with that we need. That's the key: do I trust God to keep his promise? The answer is not a "yes" or "no" but a generous response to someone in need. And what about you? Do you trust God enough to go out on a limb for others? Yes, there is a risk in all this. "He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully" (9:6). Trust in God enables us to give generously and also reap bountifully. What we get in the long run is not restricted to what we keep for ourselves, but what we share with others.

Saturday, May 20
Butler Dairy Goat Show, Lawrence County Fairgrounds, New Castle, thru May 21.
Clinton County Herb and Craft Festival, Clinton County Fairgrounds, Mackeyville, 10 a.m.-6 p.m.
Alpaca Rendezvous, Bud and Gail Stewart's Rocky Run Alpaca Farm, Malvern, thru May 21.

Sunday, May 21
Annual Open Horse Show to benefit Erie County 4-H/Youth Development Program, Waterford Fairgrounds.
Maryland Two-Cylinder Club Antique Tractor Display, Route 27 and Twin Arch Rd., Airy, Md., 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

Monday, May 22
Clean and Green Educational

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