

# SCC To Review

(Continued from Page A1)

carried out by the local conservation districts, which have a historic reputation for good relations with the farm community, unlike DER.

Under the current administration, DER has been undergoing a realignment of approach to protecting the environment. Instead of just saying, "No," to landowners and entrepreneurs seeking to alter local environs in order to create business, the agency policy is now to say, "How may I help you comply with regulations?"

The Nutrient Management Advisory Board consists of representatives mostly from agriculture and agribusiness, along with a representative of the general citizenry, the lending industry, and environmental concerns, such as the Chesapeake Bay Foundation.

For more than 18 months, the board has worked to create a set of regulations to recommend to the board.

The effort is considered to be an example of the concept behind the "Reg-Neg" type of negotiated regulation-making.

This type of effort attempts to curb public outcry after regulations have been proposed by including the to-be regulated community early in the process.

The goal of nutrient management is to prevent the uncontrolled flow of nutrients into surface and groundwaters.

The problem is yet to be fully identified, but the symptom has been increasingly degraded water

quality throughout the Susquehanna River and in many streams and aquifers throughout the state because of over-nutritification.

As a first approach, the law was designed to address the production agriculture sector.

This was done because of growing concern over local municipalities creating ordinances limiting farmers' application of manure to fields.

However, the core reason behind local governments getting involved in nutrient management has been two phenomena related to the increased demands on the land and waters of the state by a growing human population: the huge surge in the urbanization of traditional farm, field and forestland; and the advent of super-sized contract livestock production facilities on limited land.

The first phenomenon created a situation in which all livestock producers and those applying manure to their fields became surrounded by people with no or little exposure to the actual conditions of production agriculture.

The result has been intolerance of normal agricultural practices by local government officials, who either are, or were pressured by, recently urbanized commuters living in residential developments built on former farms in farming country.

Local ordinances carried varying degrees of local government intrusion into farming operations.

Further, many farms operate in

several different municipalities and were becoming subject to a variety of regulations, depending on where political boundaries cross fields.

The second phenomenon — the concentrated production facility — has created a rapid departure from the traditional ratio of manure production-to-acre on farms.

This has been caused because of low commodity prices, which some blame on government food policies, and the application of "industrial" techniques and attitudes to raising livestock.

The competitive demands on livestock production favors higher production with lower overhead.

With no controls on manure handling, large production facilities have been built on properties with insufficient acreage to allow plants to use the nutrients adequately on site.

Further, with less and less cropland available locally to raise feeds for the increased livestock populations, and land prices having skyrocketed because of the first phenomenon, it has become more competitive for some large livestock producers to import forages and feeds.

Nutrients contained in feeds which livestock don't utilize are passed on through manure.

In operations which import the majority of livestock nutrients through purchased feeds, the nutrients leave the farm in one of three ways — through the environment, through the sale of crops raised using the manure from the livestock, and through the export of the

livestock.

This is a situation used by those who argue for something called, "sustainable agriculture," though some of the initial concepts promoted by those who support "sustainable agriculture" seemed removed from the practicalities of profitable agriculture.

The Nutrient Management Act defines agricultural operations which are out of balance between the amounts of nutrients manipulated on the farm and the amount of cropland suitable for its application as "Concentrated Animal Operations."

For ease of understanding, the law sets a cap on stocking rate of 2,000 pounds liveweight per acre, on average, per year, as the threshold level before being required to develop a nutrient management plan.

However, the Nutrient Management Act allows for any size operation and any density of livestock, as long as a plan is developed to bring the operation within a close balance between nutrients and land.

That calculation does not include farm residential land, but the amount of land to which manure and other plant nutrients can be safely applied.

The Nutrient Management Act and its framers wanted to be certain that concern for responsible nutrient management didn't end with government regulating just the production agriculture community.

It does allow for expanding the scope of the law to include other sources of nutrients, such as residential on-lot underground septic

systems, non-agricultural operations that use nutrients to grow grasses, for example, for recreational or aesthetic activities, such as golf.

The packet of regulations that the state Conservation Commission is to review in June addresses production agriculture, except for a last minute attempt by some advisory board members to get those who board horses included.

It was argued that some horseboarding operations seem to have much more than 2,000 pounds of horse per acre per year, and thus represented an "animal operation" if not exactly a production agriculture operation.

It was suggested that production agriculture farmers may become upset if they see neighbors with horses not being subject to the same types of government oversight.

As a result, board members present at the April meeting created a definition in the recommended regulations with the intent to include those who board horses, though if it were to remain, could probably equally apply to dog kennels, mink ranches, pet shops, etc.

However, the commission staff advised the board that its attempt to include those who board horses by attempting to change the scope of the law through regulations would probably be ruled illegal.

Nevertheless, the board approved the package. It was said by several board members, that due to the overall agreement on the majority of recommended regulations, the completeness of the package, and the time restraints (Turn to Page A32)

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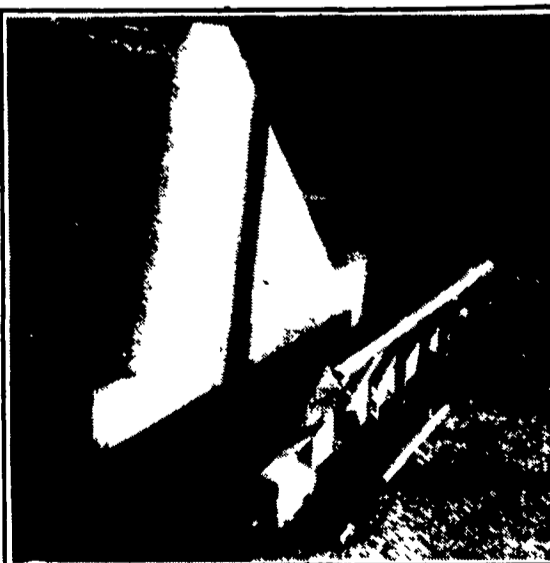
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# Lamb And Wool Checkoff

(Continued from Page A28)

"A self-help check-off program is an opportunity our industry has to continue promotion of our products and to secure economic viability," wrote Mawhinney.

But work being undertaken by ASI's headquarters in Englewood, Colo. and by lobbyists in Washington, D.C. is helping to solidify a working program, according to the sheep producer.

She indicated that the organization needs combined contributions to stave off the importers, who are "right there, sitting on the doorstep" of many producers, she said. As a result, more effort is being undertaken by ASI to include the needs of the producers on the 1995 Farm Bill.

Vogel said that the producers east of the Mississippi River account for most of the total sheep producers in the nation. Forty percent of the lambs sold in the country are sold in the Northeast.

