

Streambank, Conservation Work Catches Eye Of Neighbors, PACD

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Bupp, together with wife Judith, operate Penn Vermont Farm, located off Rt. 113 in Bedminster. The farm name came from the original location of Ken (who grew up near Bedminster), thus the name "Penn," and Ken's wife Judith, who grew up in Waits River, Vt.

The Bupps maintain about 58 acres of cropland on both sides of Rt. 113.

Of those 58, 25 are in orchards, vine crops, and other fruit crops which they sell on their farm. Much of the acreage is also pick-your-own.

In all, they grow about five acres of strawberries, one of brambles (red raspberries, black raspberries, and blackberries), two acres of sweet corn, two of apples, two of pears, one of peaches, and seven acres of pumpkins and squash.

They run a cider press operation that is tractor-driven. Cider is sold in gallons and half-gallons at the farm. The press has been in operation on the farm since 1938. They process about 20,000 gallons of cider per year.

They also take care of nearly 20 acres of rye, which they use as mulch for their rows of strawberries. They use about four acres of drip irrigation and use overhead irrigation on crops, including the sweet corn.

Bupp, who has maintained his electrical contracting business for more than 30 years, purchased the orchard in 1982. He joined the conservation district in 1984.

"We started our conservation work soon after we bought the place," he said. "It took Judith and me close to five years just to clear out the old orchards."

Both went to work removing old trees to make way for the rye crops.

After the trees were cleared, diversions were installed on a steep southern slope, including a 30-foot drop nearly 300 feet long. They put in a few hundred feet of waterways and diversions as well as a lot of underground tile.

In all, according to Ed Brzostek, a district conservationist with the NRCS, about 5,500 feet of tile have been installed on the farm. Also included at the farm are 2,800 feet of waterway and 3,500 feet of terraces and diversions.

Bupp maintains a 150-foot buffer strip between the stream and the vegetable and fruit crops he grows.

The farm pond, used extensively for irrigation, has a one million gallon capacity and encompasses about a half acre on the surface.

Ken, who said he has wanted to work on a dairy farm since working on farms in high school, first learned to be an electrical contractor. Ken and Judith once lived in the original farm homestead they now occupy. A short while later, they moved into a new home. When the opportunity arose, they purchased the farm.

"We gave up a beautiful new home and everything real nice," said Bupp. "Our friends can't understand this, but... We could have a new home if we sold the farm."

"You soon find out that new homes aren't everything."

In 1991, Bupp signed the farm up for preservation — one of the first of four farms preserved in Bucks County.

"When it was first started, there was a lot of hesitation on the part of farmers to sign up," said Bupp. "Of course, one of the big concerns and that concerns us still here is that you can get into this, but your taxes keep going up and the farm income doesn't keep up with taxes. (Farm income) doesn't keep up with other segments of the business."

One of the concerns is that the price of equipment repair keeps going up, not keeping pace with farm income.

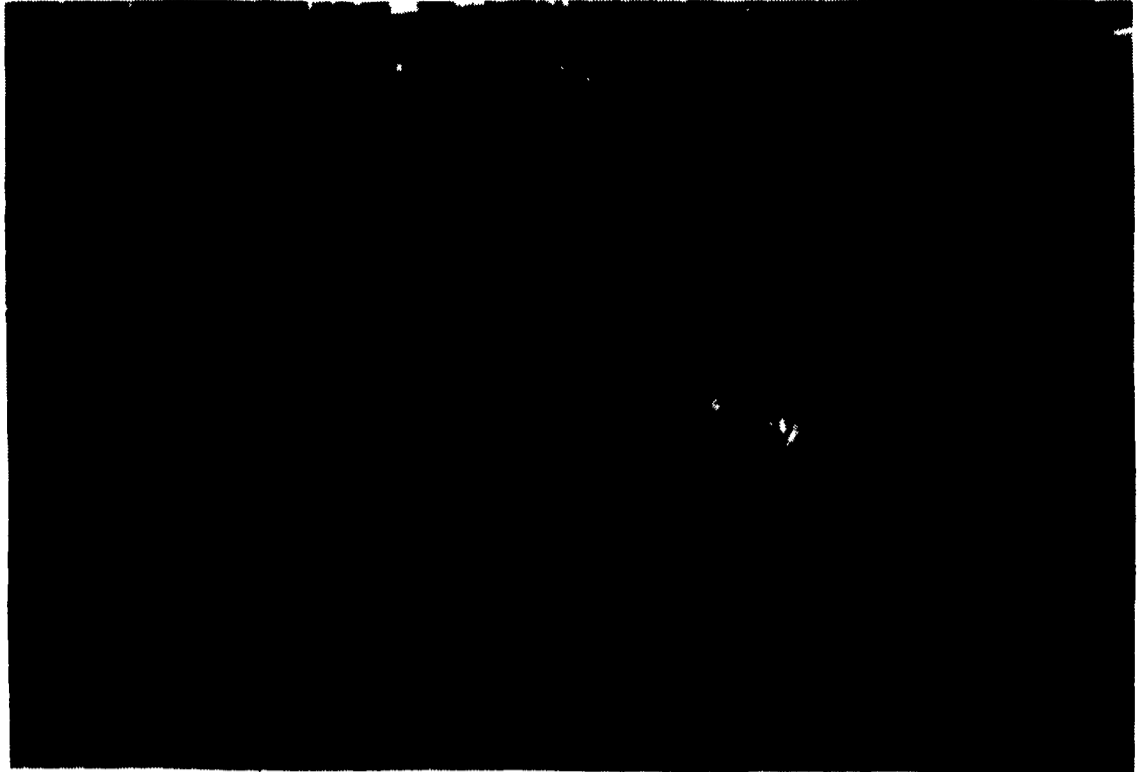
But the preservation helps farmers and the local public.

"Farmers and other landowners are seeing it as a good thing, and now it's just snowballing," said Bupp. "There are more (landowners) on the waiting list than (the preservation board) will ever be able to give them money for."

In the meantime, Bupp said the quality of the soil — a shallow silt loam — does well with his irrigation and the quality of the crops remains high. "I can compete with any county in the state for produce quality," he said.

Bupp, who was honored with the Conservation Farm of the Year Award in February 1994, said that the awards recognize the work of all the farms in the county.

"Almost every farmer you look at today is very conscious of soil and water conservation," he said. "So when we accept (the awards), I guess we're really accepting it for a lot of farmers, because any number of them could have won it."



After contacting the county conservation district and working closely with the Soil Conservation Service (now the Natural Resource Conservation Service) and the state fish commission in the early 1990s, Ken Bupp, right, made extensive repairs to the streambank. He also installed crown vetch and netting to stabilize the banks. Here Bupp inspects the crown vetch with Ed Brzostek, conservationist with the NRCS.

"I don't think we were that much outstanding than a lot of other farmers that have done a really super job."

In the past, said Bupp, you could travel down the road and see all kinds of erosion, including huge gullies in the fields. "You just rarely see that anymore."

"We could get in the car now and take a ride and look at a lot of really good work."

Bupp said he accepts the award as a personal honor, and "am really happy about it."

"It benefits me right now (and) in the immediate future," he said, "but it's also going to benefit the next owners and it benefits the neighbors and it benefits future generations."

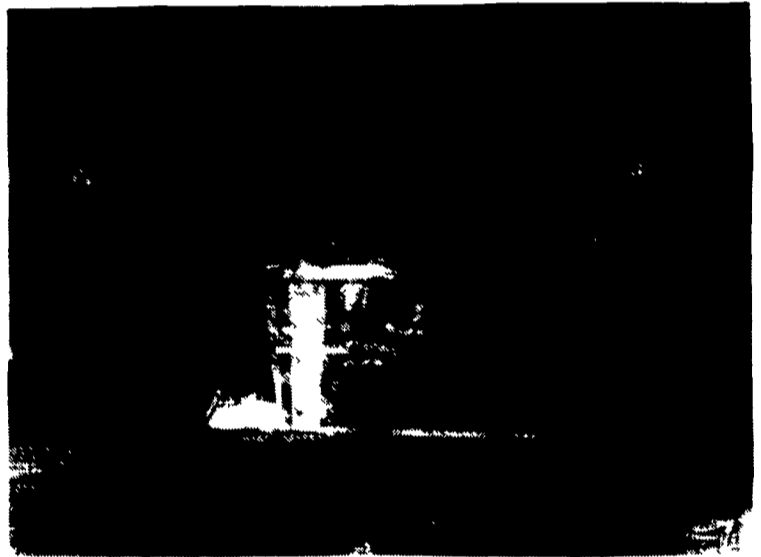
Bupp said you can never get completely finished with conservation work.

"As you're working out in the fields, you're always thinking and looking and you always see another spot that something ought to be done. You sit there day-dreaming about all this work you want to do, but then you come back to reality when the money is considered."

But cost-sharing is available. A stream crossing project on the

Bupp Farm makes use of precast concrete connected by cables. The concrete, in blocks measuring a

foot square by nine inches thick, was constructed in May 1995 with cost-share money.



In all, the Bupps grow about five acres of strawberries, one of brambles (red raspberries, black raspberries, and blackberries), two acres of sweet corn, two of apples, two of pears, one of peaches, and seven acres of pumpkins and squash. Ken Bupp, left, with Ed Brzostek.

Proposal Would Increase Apple Producer Assessment

HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — Agriculture Secretary Charles C. Brosius is urging apple producers to participate in a public hearing on Monday, Dec. 18 to discuss a proposed change to the Pennsylvania Apple Marketing Program.

The hearing is to begin at 1 p.m. in Room 309 of the Agriculture Department Building, located at 2301 North Cameron Street in Harrisburg.

Brosius noted that the program promotes the sale of Pennsylvania-grown apples and apple products.

"This program works best for growers with their input," Brosius said.

The proposed change would increase the assessment rate or producer charge of the program.

If approved, the current rates of 7 cents per bushel of apples sold for fresh market use and 4 cents per one hundred pounds (cwt.) of apples sold for processing would

be respectively increased to 12 cents per bushel and 6 cents per cwt. for the 1996-97 growing season.

Also, the proposed change includes an automatic increase of the assessment rate to 15 cents per bushel and 8 cents per cwt. in 2000.

Testimony will be received on the rate of assessment and other necessary and relevant matters. The proposed change applies to all apple producers in the commonwealth with 500 or more apple trees of any age (all ages).

To request a copy of the proposed change, schedule testimony, or obtain more information, write to the Agriculture Department, Bureau of Market Development, Pennsylvania Apple Marketing Program, 2301 North Cameron Street, Harrisburg, PA 17110-9408. The telephone number is (717) 787-5086.



Bupp said the quality of the soil — a shallow silt loam — does well with his irrigation and the quality of the crops remains high. "I can compete with any county in the state for produce quality," he said. He stands with wife, Judith and grandson, Dylan.