

# Farmers Testify: Keep New Farm Bill Regulations Realistic

**VERNON ACHENBACH JR.**  
Lancaster Farming Staff  
**WYOMISSING (Berks Co.)** — Farmers testifying Monday before a special panel of representatives of those associated with conservation provisions of the 1996 Farm Bill urged panel members to be "realistic" and to "keep decision-making local."

The special hearing was one of nine held across the nation this week to gather testimony from those affected by conservation provisions of the new Farm Bill so that the USDA can create regulations to implement the conservation provisions.

Other hearings were held in Spokane, Wash., Sioux Falls, S.D., Longmont Colo., Washington, D.C., Abilene, Texas, Sacramento, Calif., Springfield, Ill.

According to Oertly, the sites of the hearings were identical to the sites used by the USDA in 1994 to collect testimony on developing the Farm Bill.

"Now we've come back to get testimony to create regulations to implement conservation provisions," she said.

The length of time the USDA has to create regulations varies by program. Some have to be done within 60 days, while others have allowances of up to 180 days.

Testimony will still be accepted on the conservation provisions by April 30, postmarked, or by facsimile. For more information call (202) 720-1838 or mail comments to Chief Paul Johnson, USDA NRCS, P.O. Box 2890, Washington, D.C., 20013.

The hearing in Wyomissing was

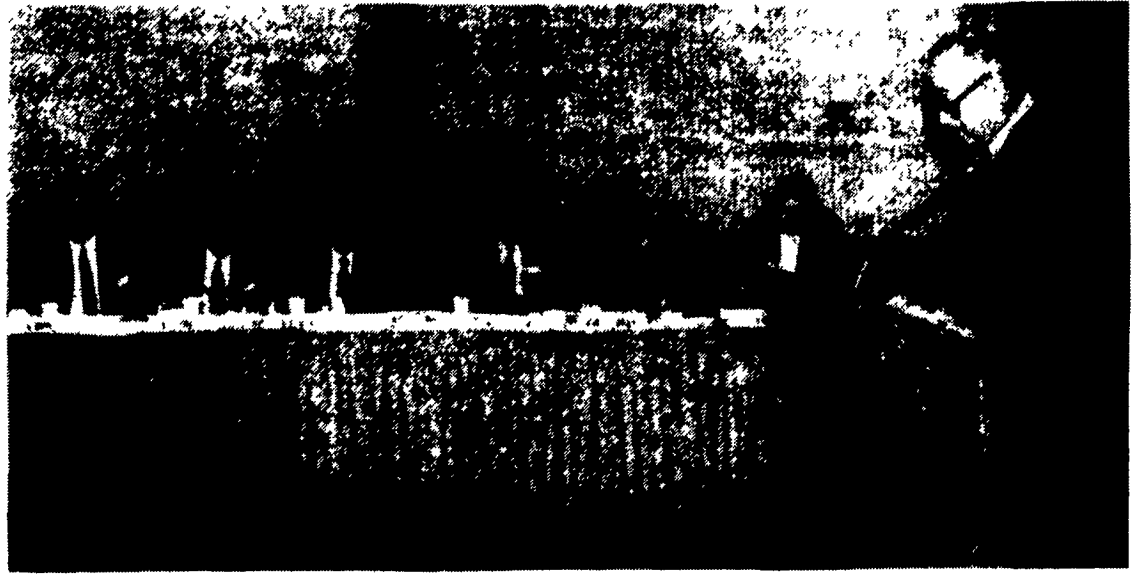
held for Pennsylvania, surrounding states and Vermont. There were 14 speakers by mid-day.

On the panel were Rich Duesterhaus, deputy chief of soil science and resource assessment with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) formerly the Soil Conservation Service; Gary Margheim, with NRCS strategic natural resources issues staff; Janet Oertly, Pennsylvania NRCS state conservationist who served as panel moderator; Bill Baumgartner, state director of the Farm Service Agency; Ken Knauer, deputy director of the USFS Northeast area; Karl Brown, executive secretary of the State Conservation Commission; Kurt Leitholf, executive director of the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts; Dave Kantner, CES assistant to the Southeast regional director; and Obie Ashford, resource conservationist for the NRCS East Region.

The agenda of the meeting was to provide a briefing on the conservation provisions of the Farm Bill and then to open the floor to specific interest groups to discuss different subjects of the Farm Bill.

Some of the comments made concerned the state technical committee which oversees some of the conservation programs. It was recommended that it be expanded and that it should have the authority as to who administers and enforces cost-sharing provisions, because every state is set up differently.

Another recommendation was that cost-sharing for livestock be set up similar to the Chesapeake



Ed Hartman, president of the Berks County Farm Bureau, testifies before a panel of officials involved with creating regulations to implement conservation provisions of the 1996 Farm Bill.

Bay Program.

It was also recommended that the \$35 million included for a federal farmland preservation program is not enough and that the \$100 to \$200 per acre that it would equate to would hardly provide much incentive to preserve farmland where taxes run from \$30 to

\$40 per acre.

Further, it was said that the program has to be administered by a local board.

It was also suggested that programs that work now should not be changed.

Voluminous paperwork sent to farmers for permits to remove sed-

iment blocking waterways should be reduced or help should be provided in helping to have it completed in a reasonable time.

One speaker said that when he went to his local office to get paperwork to get a permit to remove sediment from a water-

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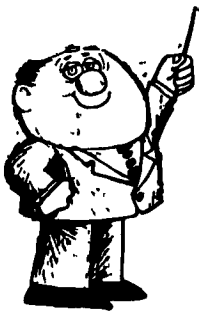
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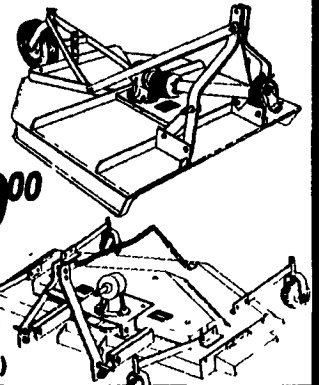
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