

Farmers Wonder: What Will It Take To Pass Bottle Bill?

Second In A Series

Editor's Note: It's clear that farmers are frustrated and angry about the amount of trash they find in the fields and what that trash has done to their livelihoods. Part two of the series will look at the proposed Bottle Bill legislation and what it would entail to farmers and consumers.

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—George Moyer has made a "collection" of his own headaches.

His "headaches" are what he found alongside road frontage, in his fields. They include Pepsi and Mountain Dew bottles.

Some of the collection is unique. A friend gave him a sarsaparilla bottle made in Mexico, marketed in Sioux City, Calif., imprinted in clear letters: 5 cent deposit, VT-IA.

Moyer, who helps manage Mor-Dale Farms in Myerstown, bought a sixpack of Mountain Dew in Iowa that cost him about 35 cents a can — with a 5-cent deposit clearly marked. An iced tea bottle in Arizona is imprinted with a 5-cent deposit in Massachusetts.

One bottle Moyer obtained from a friend included a 10-cent deposit

by 83 percent.

According to figures from the Container Recycling Institute, bottle bill states recycle more than twice as much glass, per capita, as non-bottle bill states. The states that don't have the bill, such as Pennsylvania, continue to landfill a great deal of glass and aluminum — knowing there is only so much land available.

New York State has operated successful redemption centers for years. Moyer, who has traveled to see these centers, says that store owners and consumers are happy with the system.

Moyer serves on the one of the committees in the Pennsylvania Farm Bureau to ensure the passage of the bill. Now, the bureau is gearing up to get signatures to support H.B. 922.

More legislators will be petitioned until the bill is passed.

Recently, 500 signatures were gathered from schools in the Elizabethtown and Hummelstown districts, all in favor of a bill.

Consumers have already voted in favor of a bill. Moyer pointed to a survey conducted in the winter of 1985 by Sen. David J. Brightbill (R-48th). More than 7,000 individuals responded to a survey mailed in the winter of 1985 from Bright-

ram — but many townships, such as Bethel, where Moyer lives, have less than 5,000 and so don't have a program.

And there are many townships and boroughs in the state with farms just like Moyer.

"Our patience has run out," said Guy F. Donaldson, Pennsylvania Farm Bureau (PFB) president, at a news conference at the Ronald Kopp Farm in Middletown last April. "Bottles and cans are still being dumped along the roads, in our fields and front yards, and on public lands."

The PFB wants at least a five-cent deposit placed on bottles and cans as an incentive to recycle instead of throwing them along the roadside. Incidentally, a news conference was held at the Kopp Farm more than 13 years ago to show the need for a mandatory deposit on bottles and cans. In April, Donaldson and Kopp walked along some of the road frontage of the Kopp Farm, picking up bottles, cans, and other trash that motorists dumped from their vehicles.

Two years ago, in July 1995, *Lancaster Farming* published a series entitled "Vanishing Acres," which looked at the challenges farmers faced when dealing with urban neighbors. *Lancaster Farming* visited the farm of dairyman John Valkovec, Klecknersville, who farms more than 500 acres — much near highly developed land.

Valkovec remembered mowing some alfalfa near a development where residents decided to use the field as a golfball driving range. In all, the dairyman had to pick up 100 balls from the field.

But for Valkovec, the golf balls aren't nearly as frustrating as the empty beer cans.

"When you're chopping silage," he said, "before you see the cans, they're on the load and you have to throw the load away."

Like many farmers, he's had to pick up bottles and cans strewn about in his fields.

Opponents of the proposed Bottle Bill have said that mandat-

ory township recycling laws have done much to stem the flow of trash into farmers' fields. But "the recycling law is not working to solve the problems we have out here in the country," said Ronald Kopp of Middletown. In Londonderry Township, home to about

and cans they buy, sometimes before they come home from work, for recycling.

Many people won't make that extra effort to put that trash in the recycling bin, insisted Kopp. A five-cent deposit on bottles and cans would change that.

Oregon passed the state's Beverage Container Act (also called the Oregon Bottle Bill) in 1971.

Within two years of the bill's implementation, litter from beverage containers had dropped by 83 percent.

2,500 residents, there is no mandatory recycling law. However, townships bordering Londonderry, including Derry and Swatara and Lower Swatara, have recycling laws.

Kopp said there must be some kind of financial incentive for people to recycle the cans and bottles. Now, however, people see no value in the trash and simply toss it out the window. People don't have the incentive to keep the bottles

"Even if we had a 5-cent deposit return on containers, and someone still chose to throw that can or bottle or whatever out into the roadside, there would be people out there that could benefit by picking up the cans, because they would have a nickel every time they picked something up," he said.

Before a trash pickup and news conference at his farm in April, Kopp said he and his wife Connie

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in Michigan.

"I never met anybody who opposes a bottle bill," said Moyer. All those states have mandatory deposit legislation.

Pennsylvania, for whatever reason, doesn't.

Actually, Moyer knows why Pennsylvania doesn't have a Bottle Bill. Pressure from Bottle Association lobbyists has been fierce, heated, and relentless at the state assembly.

The reason? The bottlers insist it would cost too much money in helping to set up collection sites and paying for the returned material, according to Moyer. Recyclers claim a tight return on their investment, and recycling glass is still costly.

But if other states have mandatory deposits, why doesn't Pennsylvania?

bill's office.

On the results of the winter survey, question number 3 asked: "Would you support a 'bottle bill' that would require a five-cent deposit on all beverage containers sold in Pennsylvania?" Of the respondents, 68.5 percent voted "yes" to the question, and only 29.1 percent voted no.

In the summer survey, 52.1 percent of the responded voted for a five-cent deposit on cans and bottles. Almost 80 percent of the respondents indicated that a forced deposit of that type would motivate them to return used containers.

In the summer survey, on question 4, "Do the problems created for farmers by littered cans and bottles cause you to look at litter legislation more favorably?" 81 percent of the respondents indi-

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Oregon passed the state's Beverage Container Act (also called the Oregon Bottle Bill) in 1971. Actually, the bill was written up in 1969. Oregon instituted the nation's first statewide program to begin recycling in 1984. Other states have modeled their programs on Oregon's bill, which proponents claim has substantially reduced litter in the state.

According to Oregon's Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), within two years of the bill's implementation, litter from beverage containers had dropped

cated yes. On question 6, "Do you feel the ultimate social gain of a litter-free environment outweighs the costs to taxpayers in one form or another involved in either type of legislation?" 73.5 percent noted yes.

If so many people are voting in favor of the bill, why hasn't it passed?

According to Moyer, bottlers won a concession years ago with the passage of mandatory community recycling programs. However, communities with more than 5,000 people are part of the prog-



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