

# Ag Secretary Approves First Nutrient Plan

(Continued from Page A23)

The program was moderated by Karl Brown, executive secretary of the State Conservation Commission, of which Secretary Hayes is chairman.

Ultimate authority for implementing the regulations and approving management plans lies with the SCC.

In his comments, Secretary Hayes talked about the significance of the moment for the entire state.

He said it is noteworthy that the nature of the state's nutrient management program is such that it does not create a burden upon profitable production agriculture, and at the same time truly deals with environmental concerns shared by the agricultural and non-agricultural community.

Hayes said that without profitable agriculture the residents of the state can not afford to enjoy the standards of living that they have; and without being able to be profitable, agricultural operations can not afford to preserve farmland and open spaces essential to the environmental health necessary for all.

In brief, he said the nutrient management laws and implementing regulations created by Pennsylvania should serve as an exam-

ple for the rest of the nation as a way to solve an environmental problem shared by all, without creating more problems for just a few.

He also noted that the regulations and the nutrient management law bring greater emphasis to the importance of the state conservation districts and the SCC.

Hayes talked about the new attitudes in government which foster problem solving through private and public partnerships working together for a common goal, as well as multi-agency and multi-government cooperation.

"I don't prefer an overabundance of government regulation," Hayes said, adding that he considered that, left to himself and with the freedom of time and resources to do something other than attempt to make money, most farmers would operate in ways that are not environmentally damaging.

However, he said, "We are growing (in population) and getting closer (in proximity), so we must work together. There must be an opportunity for agriculture to thrive.

"We can not be the way we want to be in America without agriculture."

Others speaking included Lan-

caster County Commissioner Paul Thibault, who said that while he knows that managing resources is a "challenging enterprise," he said he feels that youth today observing adults dealing with such problems are skeptical that they can preserve a healthy environment in the face of shallow-minded greed and competitive consumption.

He said that Act 6 — the Nutrient Management Act — is a step in that direction, as well as urban growth boundaries, well-head protection laws, and other measures recently taken by state and community leaders.

Jerry Hostetter, owner/operator of Hostetter Management Company, said he raises 13,000 sows in Pennsylvania and his company has recently received a national environmental award conferred by the Eastern Region of the National Pork Producers Council. The award was for Hostetter's nutrient management program.

Though approval of his nutrient management plan is pending, it is expected to be approved.

He praised the regulations, not only because they are good for the environment, he said, but because they eliminate the patchwork of local ordinances which began to be created as local municipalities became the battle grounds between high-density livestock operations and residents and creators of housing developments.

He said the statewide consistency of the law is good for business, and the liability protection also helps. He said the increased record keeping also helps business owners because they are better equipped to make decisions for increased efficiency.

As a representative of the state's hog industry, Hostetter said that Pennsylvania has been wise to take this course because poor management leads to poor public perceptions, and he said that the entire swine industry has been given a black eye from the wide-spread reports of environmental damage attributed to hog operations in North Carolina.

Don Robinson, manager of the Lancaster County Conservation District, who also helped the Nutrient Management Advisory

Board through the regulation creation process, said that conservation districts around the state are ready for their role in implementing the regulations.

For Lancaster County, he said he estimates that there may be up to 1,000 operations in need of mandatory plans, out of the county's estimated 4,500 farming operations.

The SCC estimates there are 2,500 such farms statewide.

Logan Myers, representing the Lititz Run Watershed Alliance (a group of stakeholders attempting to work together to improve the quality of the entire Lititz Run Watershed), announced that the group has agreed to help farmers within the watershed financially to develop plans.

Under the state nutrient management program, up to 75 percent of the cost of developing plans (estimated according to some sources as possibly ranging from \$400 and up depending on the extent of work required) is to be cost-shared for mandatory plans.

The Lititz Run Alliance recently approved providing the remaining 25 percent for the mandatory operations in its watershed in order to develop plans.

In addition to the plan signing, Leon Ressler with the Penn State Extension, demonstrated manure application rates so that members of the press could understand and pass it on.

The farm plan calls for the application rate of 25 tons of steer manure per acre on some of the crop land. Ressler showed how calibration was figured with weights of manure, and amount discharged from a spreader over a specific distance, traveling at a specific speed.

Then manure was actually applied at the rate of 25 tons per acre, providing an accurate visual representation, rather than merely allowing public imagination to conceive on its own what 25 tons per acre would represent.

The reason for the press conference and the nutrient management laws is population growth, culture-wide changes in traditional practices, and the resulting environmental effects.

The continual decline of the Chesapeake Bay has been a focal point for the main issue — an assault on the environment from a booming residential growth and its land-moving activities, as well as changing economic pressures on farms.

For farms, land values increased as post-industrial entrepreneurs turned heavily to high-profit residential development and began competing for available farmland.

High interest rates during the late 1970s and early 1980s curtailed much of that, but recovery to lower rates through the 1980s until present not only brought a reprise to the housing industry, but investment and capitalist strategists created new mega-sized discount retail stores, household and food outlets, and strip malls in close proximity to the new residential developments, competing further for farmland.

At the same time, investors were reluctant to pursue development on previously used lands because of the risks of having courts find them financially liable for the complete removal of potential toxins and carcinogens, even if the current owner had no knowledge and responsibility for it being there.

(Brownfields legislation now allows land to be used for its historical uses, as long as contaminants are contained and not excessive.)

Additional roadways and earth-moving activities resulted in the need for government to prescribe new ways to deal with storm water problems and the associated sedimentation and nutrient loads, such as mandatory stormwater retention dams swales, and waterways.

Concern grew also about the increase in speed of decline of the Chesapeake Bay, and former Gov. Robert Casey signed an agreement along with other governors of states affecting the Chesapeake to reduce Pennsylvania's nutrient contribution to the Bay by 40 percent by 2000.

Though nutrient management law has been considered for more almost two decades, the Chesapeake Bay agreement and local nuisance ordinances hurting farming operations put more pressure on politicians and state leadership to create the nutrient management law.

There are three nutrients of concern to the Chesapeake Bay — nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium. The state nutrient management law deals with nitrogen, the nutrient of most concern.

Other states, such as Maryland, have nutrient management programs that encourage farmers to develop and implement nutrient management plans.

## ANNUAL FALL CONSIGNMENT AUCTION

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10 AM

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SUN OCT 12 - 10AM Rennings Farmer's Mkt, Rt 61 at Rt 443, PA Pet supplies, feed, cages, toys bedding carriers & more Live animals sold at 1PM Kenneth Hartranft, Auct

MON OCT 13 - 10AM 402 W Orange St, Lancaster Pa Restaurant equip 4 glass door refrig fiber glass sink, deli case 3' 4' & 6' shelf units & more For Luda Rasolko Miller & Siegnest, Aucts

THURS OCT 16 10AM Midway btwn Bedford & Everett, Pa Along Rt 30 at The East End Tractor Place Bedford Co Remaining inventory of parts & accessories By Doris Perdew Stanelly Claycomb & Assoc

FRI OCT 17 - 5 30PM Leesport Farmer's Market (meeting room) off Rt 61 at N end of Leesport, Berks Co, Pa 228 Winross Trucks 40 Ertl Banks & misc toys By 1 Owner Collection from Womelsdorf Pa Kenneth P Leiby, Auct

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