

Foes-For-Us Target Phosphorus

(Continued from Page A10)

Unless equipped with true leadership abilities and some power to stand up against broad misconceptions, the politician has to live by the axiom that perception is reality.

Given the fact that farmers represent fewer than 2 percent of the voting public, the perception can easily become anti-agriculture, and mandating zero-tolerance for phosphorus is definitely anti-agriculture.

The bottom line is that there are efforts underway to convince people that phosphorus is somehow a threat to human health.

While phosphorus may be an issue for some farming operations and local waterways, a main concern for phosphorus has been eliminated years ago — phosphates in laundry detergents were banned in many products and states, and it is no longer a nationwide cause for water pollution, fish kills and algae blooms.

Phosphates coming from wastewater treatment plants have also been reduced significantly.

In every aspect to life, when large problems are ameliorated, without a considered, realistic perspective, small problems can then become interpreted as large problems. (Proper perspective requires a historical context, something which currently seems to extend only back as far as the length of the public's attention span.)

Today that is true even more so because we have professional fear-mongers building illusions to keep a core group of followers loyal and financially supportive.

If the phosphorus-proposals get through the Maryland Legislature and conference committee they will most likely be made into law, though the effect would start in 2004 or 2006, depending on the outcome of legislative debate and compromise.

By the time the law would go into practical effect, the real

cause of the Pfisteria problem may have been discovered, but only if funding for research is appropriately made.

Even then, it could be too late for Maryland to rescue its agricultural industry from leaving the region for more hospitable places in the world.

Pennsylvania must never follow Maryland's lead and acquiesce to political pressure to change its nutrient management policies.

Nitrogen was selected by Pennsylvania as the nutrient of most concern for a variety of reasons. Phosphorus was not.

While phosphorus is a nutrient and should be considered in an overall nutrient management plan, it is not a cause for fear, and it must not be allowed to become the driving concern in a nutrient management plan.

The only way to calm fears is to provide a firm, serious and sensible message supported by fact. Penn State University and other research institutions provide us with those supportive facts. They need funding to continue and perhaps expand research into these areas to get more soundly scientific facts with which to refute the fear-mongers.

The outcome of battles through the judicial system to curtail fear-mongering have largely failed, perhaps because there may have never been such a broad spectrum of discrepancy between public knowledge and technical knowledge, or perhaps it's too early in the battle and lawyers have to become more creative and aggressive in considering the cases being defended under the mantra of Freedom of Speech.

Perhaps if reputation protections of the food and agricultural industry were sought not from a standpoint of product defamation, but rather through showing complicity in public fraud and deception, then the outcome would be different. Who knows?

However, without the substantiating factual information that can be gained through timely, appropriate research, the door is wide open for professional fear-mongering.

And without a respected, (perhaps even paternalistic) voice of reason offering sane, logical, constructive research-based information, that information is open to being equated by the public with distortions and lies from fringe conjecturists and fear-mongers.

With those facts, and with a respected, grown-up voice of reason standing behind it, there is a greater chance for being able to quickly and effectively rest public fears that are being continually aroused by fear-mongering.



Invitation For Bids

MIFFLINTOWN (Juniata Co.) — The Juniata County Conservation District is requesting bids for the construction of a manure storage system to be funded in part by the Chesapeake Bay Program. The construction of this project is expected to begin by the end of May. The site is located in Walker Township, Juniata County on Ronald Jones's farm.

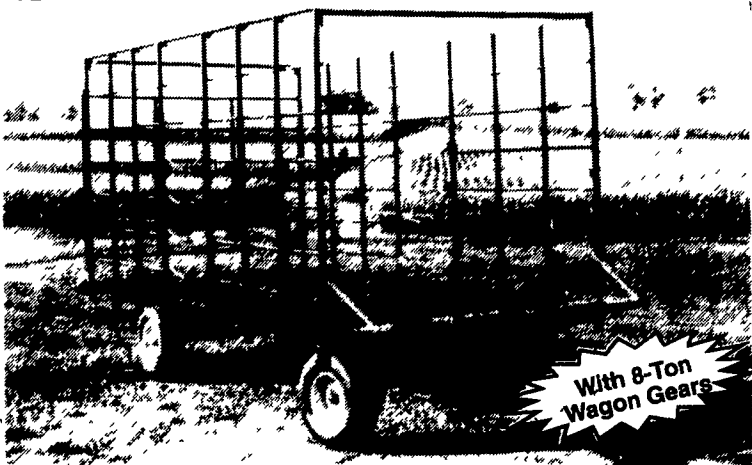
There will be a site showing at 9 a.m. on April 27 at the site location. Tank contractors and excavating contractors are encouraged to attend. Prospective contractors will receive a bid package which contains instructions to bidders, a sample contract form, the plans and specifications for the project, and bid sheet. Bid packages will also be available by request after the site showing.

Small and minority business and women's business enterprises are encouraged to respond to this invitation for bids.

The bid opening will be held at the Juniata County Conservation District Office, Smith Road, RD 3, Box 302, Mifflintown, PA 17059 on May 8 at noon.

To obtain further information, contact the Juniata County Conservation District at: Juniata Co. Conservation District, RD 3, Box 302, Mifflintown, PA 17059. (717-436-5155)

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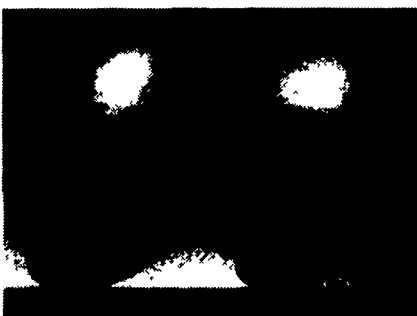
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