

Conservation Farmer Of Year Understands Season's Challenges

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icipation and planning, and fits well into best management practices on conserved land.

For his efforts, Beam was honored Thursday evening with the Conservation Farmer of the Year Award at a special celebration honoring those who have served the district in this, the district's 50th anniversary. The celebration took place at the Brandywine Valley Association in West Chester.

According to Dan Grieg of the district, the Beam Farm includes approximately 1,754 acres of cropland in Elverson. The Beam Farm has been a cooperator with the district since 1983.

Since that time, the Beams have adopted many conservation practices in the plan, including conservation tillage, contour strips, residue management, contour or cross slope farming, cover crops, and nutrient management.

"William Beam has also carried on the conservation legacy on home and rented lands by constructing, rebuilding, or maintaining the following practices on his home and rented lands," noted the district.

Those practices include 14,965 feet of gradient terraces, 2,138 feet of grassed waterways, 820 feet of storage terrace, 615 feet of underground outlet, 1,551 feet of subsurface drainage, and 1,800 feet of diversions.

Beam noted that on his farms, 1,000 acres are in corn, 500 acres in beans (including double-crop soybeans), 225 acres are in small grains (barley and wheat), and he manages 100 acres of hay.

Beam was in the fields late last week, spraying herbicide and anticipating a year in which rotation is necessary to deal with weeds and disease and eventually be rotated back to corn, to improve yields.

Putting in beans will "help weed control and control disease in the corn. It's also good for the soil," Beam said.

Beam noted that, whenever he purchases new land or even leases new land in his farm program, he contacts the NRCS and they put a conservation program together. "All farms are under a conservation program," he said. That includes land he rents from "roughly, 30 landlords," said Beam.

He tries to work each parcel of land one at a time, a day at a time, within a certain area. "I don't run from one to another every other day," he said.

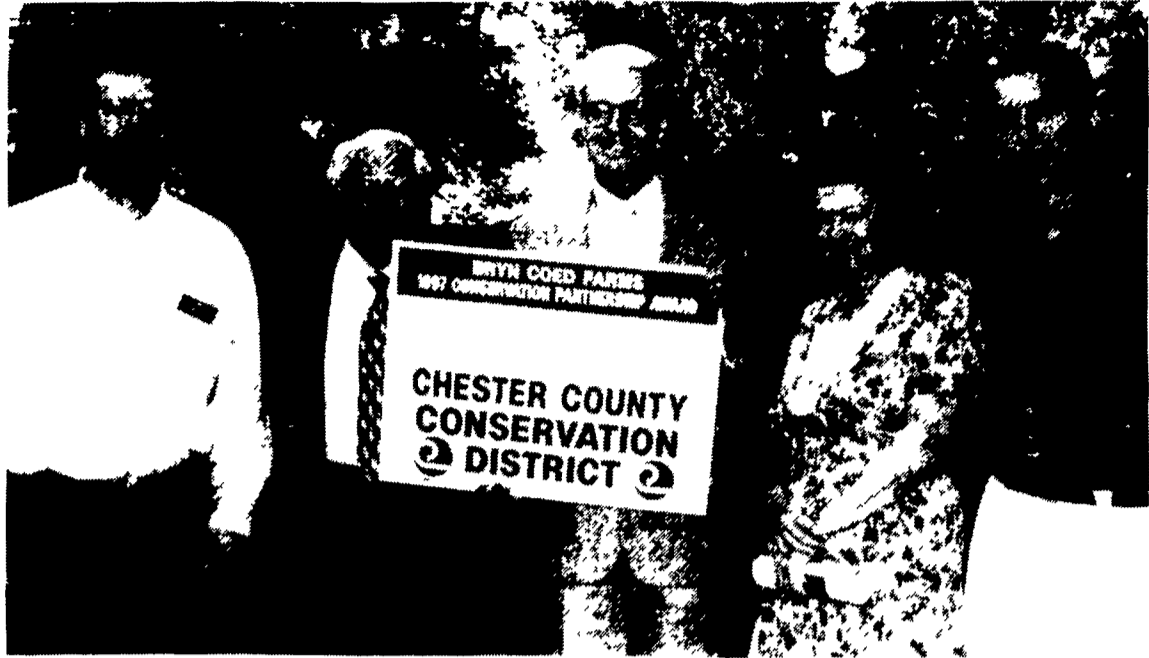
A big challenge has been exceedingly wet soil from the recent 13-day long stretch of rain — the longest in many counties in the southeast Pennsylvania region — which "can be a problem with no-till," he said. Beam noted that five inches of rain fell in a two-week time period. In some cases, he may have to chisel plow to warm up the soil and dry it out.

Beam uses a moldboard plow onto to maintain terraces.

In addition to cropland, Beam finishes about 40 head of beef per year, in addition to fair and Farm Show hogs.

He supplies sawdust bedding to various customers.

Also at the anniversary celebration, several others were honored by the district. They include:



The Conservation Partnership Award was presented Thursday evening to Rick Schlosberg and the Bryn Coed Farms, Chester Springs. Bryn Coed Farms and Schlosberg have maintained a partnership as landowner and tenant farmer for several years. Dan Grieg presents the award to Richard Dietrich, Bryn Coed Farms, center. From left, Grieg; Silvio Schiaroll, consultant for the farms; Dietrich; Donna Himmel; and Schlosberg.

• The Conservation Partnership Award. This was presented Thursday evening to Rich Schlosberg and the Bryn Coed Farms, Chester Springs. Bryn Coed Farms and Schlosberg have maintained a partnership as landowner and tenant farmer for several years. Bryn Coed Farms, primarily cash crops, has been a cooperator since 1975. Schlosberg became a cooperator in 1988. Bryn Coed entered a long-term agreement with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in 1992 and recently signed a contract in the Environmental Quality Incentive Program. The farms make use of conservation tillage, residue management, contour farming, nutrient management, cover crops, and pest management practices. They have constructed the following best management practices according to its conservation plan: 3,000 feet of subsurface drainage, 12,375 feet of grassed waterways, 13,375 feet of diversions, and three stone structures.

• The 1997 Stewardship Award. This award was presented to Ben Beiler and Tim Barlow. Beiler and Barlow became cooperators in 1972 and implemented their first conservation plan in 1980. They also signed a long-term agreement with the NRCS in 1981 and again in 1994. Beiler and Barlow have



The Excellence in Conservation Award was presented to Heritage at Parke Farm Development in East Bradford Township. This award is given in recognition of a development, construction activity, or design in which exceptional best management practices are incorporated, implemented, and maintained. From left, Chip Vaughan and Ted Moser receive the honor from Dan Grieg.

taken great measures to ensure their farm in Russellville remains protected and in agriculture. This stewardship paired a young farmer with a well-established farmer to create a successful agricultural enterprise, according to the district. The farm uses conservation tillage, contour strips, cover crops, residue management, crop management, grasses and legumes in rotation, agronomic consultant, nutrient management, and pest management practices. The farm also uses 5,926 feet of grass waterways, 4,683 feet of gradient terrace, 1,735 feet of diversions, in addition to manure storage and barnyard runoff control methods.

• Excellence in Conservation Award. This award was presented to Heritage at Parke Farm Development in East Bradford Township. This award is given in recognition of a development, construction activity, or design in which exceptional best management practices are incorporated, implemented, and maintained. The development, overlooking the east branch of the Brandywine River, demonstrates and showcases preservation of open spaces and viewsheds, protection of sensitive environmental features, alternative storm water management designs, and other erosion and sediment controls such as sediment traps, stabilized swales, silt fence and rock construction entrances, mulch for interim stabilization, minimal disturbance, and timely permanent stabilization.

Dan Grieg noted that the district

was formed in July 1947 to provide technical assistance to farmers in developing a complete conservation program. In the first year of operations, 1948, 219 applications for assistance from landowners were received, 55 conservation plans were written, 110 soil surveys were completed, and 210 farmers were contacted.

In 1997, the district's budget was more than \$300,000 with 12 full-time and part-time staff. Under the Chesapeake Bay Program, four new bay contracts were completed, best management practices worth more than \$175,000 were installed, and under the erosion and sediment control program, in 1997 the district staff received approximately 722 plans, reviewed 674 plans, inspected 780 sites, and responded to 69 formal complaints.

Under the Red/White/Christina Program, the Red White Clay Creeks Land Treatment Program was funded by NRCS after a 10-year planning and marketing effort by the district and the local field office. NRCS and district partners signed up 40 landowners for the program. NRCS development conservation plans and wrote contracts to implement best management plans for 10 landowners, committing \$549,721 in federal funds.

Under the nutrient management program, the staff developed nutrient management plans for 15 farmers.



The 1997 Stewardship Award was presented to Ben Beiler and Tim Barlow. Dan Grieg, far right, presents the award to Janet and Ben Beiler.



The list of troublesome, noxious weeds can make the "weeds of dishonor" on any crop producer's list: Canada thistle, dandelions, wild onion, and foxtail and other grasses. Beam decided to bring out the spray boom and take care of the problem first — all the while hoping it would stay dry long enough to finish corn and soybean planting.