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State Program Targets

(Continued from Page A20)

The purpose of the training is to make the roadmasters aware of the environmental impacts of their road construction and maintenance practices.

The program was apparently created with a good understanding of the road manager job and common practices.

It reviews common problems and situations, then provides a mix of introductory level and advanced level educational materials to help provide an enhanced awareness about the negative consequences of some maintenance and construction techniques and corrective measures and considerations.

The topics covered geology and soils, water drainage aspects and road principals, basic grading principals, erosion control and sedimentation, bank stabilization, maintenance, technologies, regulations and grants.

A common theme in the entire program is watershed protection, its proper care, and prevention of water pollution.

Those seeking to prevent water pollution were the source of force behind the effort to establish the new program.

But water flows are integral to the nature of dirt and gravel roads.

For example, a bend in a dirt road, depending on how it was constructed, can become a water trap.

The trapped water saturates the soil, dissolving some of the soluble particles, incorporating some of the suspended solids, and acting as a lubricant for the movement of particles.

When a vehicle drives through the area, the wet area is soft and pushes out. Any standing water sprays away from the tire, taking with it what road engineers call "fines," the small particles.

The fines wash out and the larger road materials become loose, and begin to be moved out with successive usage.

Eventually a rut is formed, and the longer it is allowed to remain and hold water, the faster that stretch of road will erode.

Too dry of a road can cause dust problems.

Dust from dirt roads can be controlled through various methods, such as spraying with approved non-toxic adhesives or dampening or binding agents.

Large-scale highway construction with finished surfaces appear fairly generic over long stretches, and detached from local landscape.

They should be expected to have well built-up subsurfaces engineered to avoid saturation under normal seasonal conditions.

However, dirt and gravel roads are part of the environment in which they are built. They are a manipulation of the environment, rather than a challenge to it.

According to Karl Brown, executive secretary of the State Conservation Commission (SCC), a reference is under contract with Penn State University to develop and publish.

He said the state Department of Environmental Resources and the Task Force had compiled all existing standards and specifications for non-paved roads. He said it's referred to as the "Yellow Book," but it is too unwieldy to use.

He said Penn State is to be finishing on second generation work, more appropriate to use on dirt and gravel roads.

"It's certainly valuable to farmers and roadmasters and other people," he said.

He also said that of the \$5 million allocated, \$1 million is to go directly to the state Department of Conservation of Natural Resources Bureau of Forestry.

The remaining \$4 million are to be directed through the SCC and then through county districts. The money comes from the state's Motor Vehicle License fund, otherwise known as the gas tax.

Locally, the program is to be administered through a quality control board consisting of a four-member board.

Two members of the board are to be appointed by the county conservation district board of directors. The other two are to be a representative of the local field office of the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and a representative of the Pa. Fish and Boat Commission.

Of those from the county conservation district, one is to serve as non-voting chairperson of the quality board, while the other is a voting member. They can be directors, associated directors, staff, or anyone else the district board chooses to appoint.

To local conservation district is to assist road managers, coordinate the dirt and gravel road program at the county level, and to review the one-page applications (still being finalized) from the municipalities and other eligible agencies.

As soon as the applications are finalized and made available, conservation districts can begin accepting and reviewing them.

Because it is in its first year, and because the state has identified specific watersheds with high quality or high value streams for immediate attention, the program is to initially be offered only to those within those designated watersheds.

After work on those initial areas is underway the program will open up to other areas.



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