

Tulpehocken Watershed Receives Conservation Funding

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The only thing the program needs from the farmer is a proposal that describes the kind of work to be done. After an inventory and evaluation of each farm by the Natural Resource Conservation Service, a timetable for the conservation practice implementation will be set.

Under the auspices of the program, farmers can take five years to sign up and another five years to implement the program, according to Kim Fies, conservation specialist with the Berks County Conservation District. The Berks office will act as a "clearinghouse" for proposals under the PL 566 program. Fies will be the central contact person for the program.

"There are more than 300 farms in the watershed that can benefit from the program," said Fies.

Groundwork on the PL 566 program began about two years

ago, involving about 27 different federal, state, and local agencies, according to Charles Wertz of the Lebanon district. This project is sponsored by the Berks County Conservation District and Berks County Conservancy.

A variety of different agencies provided "multiple inputs" for the program. The sponsors received funding authorization approval in February this year and have been asked to seek landowners to sign up.

In the past, under programs of this sort, according to Fies, cost sharing was in the amount of 65 percent. But this program provides a hefty 75 percent cost sharing.

An "assessment" of the program was mailed at the beginning of May to landowners in the Berks and Lebanon County Tulpehocken Watershed areas, with a self-addressed reply requested. The responses, in some areas, have



On a recent tour of the Troutman farm were, from left, Kim Fies, conservation specialist with the Berks County Conservation District; Richard Troutman, in back; Heather Rodriguez, ecology major from Millersville University; and Charles W. Wertz, district manager with the Lebanon County Conservation District.

been good. About 25 landowners have responded with interest in the waste management systems area, about 11 more than the goal of the program for the planned timeframe. About 24 responded to interest in the barnyard runoff programs, twice more than planned for the same timeframe.

However, for interest in the nutrient management systems part of the program, 4,500 acres was the projected goal. As of early last week, only 4,213 acres were under requests from landowners. The

soil erosion goal of 5,700 acres for the program amounted to only 4,755 acres as of last week.

In wetlands preservation, out of a goal of 30 acres, only eight acres are in interest.

These goals have been set as part of the federal program, according to Wertz.

Wertz believes the program's fish and wildlife habitat components could help mitigate a difficult situation in Jackson Township, Lebanon County. Discovery of a bog turtle has put a park pro-

ject on hold. Wertz believes the park and turtle could co-exist with design and implementation of a plan made possible through the PL 566 project.

"Many farmers are accepting the need for buffers and their impact on nutrient loads," according to the district manager. "It is not costing (landowners) a lot. They are not seeing real estate values going down the drain." Many of these programs will work to abate sediment load in the Tulpe-

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On the Tulpa-Canal farm owned by Floyd and Janice Martin and family near Womelsdorf, a crossing over the Tulpehocken was installed, together with stream bank fencing. Here, Kim Fies inspects the crossing.



On the Troutman farm, projects were installed to help manage nutrients, ensure stream bank stability, stem soil erosion, and ultimately improve herd health.



With the help of the conservation district, in March last year a clean water collection system, including six collection boxes and 1,500 feet of pipe, was installed at a cost of \$8,000. Troutman inspects one of the boxes in the farm lane.



A farm contains a concrete agricultural crossing structure installed over a stream, also with stream bank protection.