

Environmentalists Want Moratorium On Hog Farms

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At the end of the public meeting period, a summary of comments is to be created and made available through both agencies.

Respective staff and leadership of the agencies are to review the comments and look at changes for a final Unified Strategy to be issued by the end of 1999, according to officials at the meeting.

The Joint Unified Strategy for AFOs, in brief, is a plan for how the USDA is to work with the EPA to use interpretations of authorities granted under the federal Clean Water Act and the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) to detect, regulate and enforce mandatory comprehensive

nutrient management planning of livestock operations.

The plan targets not only high density operations sited on small acreage, but also provides for potential mandatory planning for any livestock operation, given the water quality conditions of the watershed in which the farm sits, and the nature and characteristics of the existing operations.

Copies of the proposal are available through both agencies, as well as through their respective Internet homepages.

The meeting was one of 11 held nationally, and Janet Oertly, the state conservationist (Pennsylvania's leader) of the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service,

said she was happy for Pennsylvania to serve as a site for one of the national meetings.

"We were pleased to be able to host an AFO listening session in Harrisburg," Oertly said. "It's critical to get input from the public on new policies."

Oertly repeated a statement made earlier about the draft proposal — that it does not create any new regulations — although others are not quite sure that is accurate since the Unified Strategy calls for rewriting existing regulations to conform to the program

that is to be in place to control farm nutrient management operations.

While some would argue that rewriting — or "revising" as the document states — regulations is lawmaking in essence, others consider that setting agency policy and regulations are seen as a means for implementing laws, not creating them.

"I do want to reiterate that this strategy does not create any new laws or regulations. It coordinates our work and that of EPA," she said.

"NRCS is a strong supporter of

agriculture and we will continue to work with landowners on a voluntary basis to help them care for the land," Oertly said.

"We also want to insure some economic stability for their way of life. We recognize the stewardship ethic of the majority of the farm community. Farmers want to do what's best for the land.

"It's our job to help them with the technology to do that. That's also why we feel it's important to maintain the confidentiality of our files and support their efforts to do the right thing," she said.

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Bob Mikesell, with Penn State University's College of Agricultural Sciences, testifies before a listening panel of USDA, EPA and federal legislator representatives, about the National Pork Producers Association's National Pork Dialogue program and how it proactively has developed operational guidelines for industry producers, in an effort to prevent overbearing government regulation of the industry.

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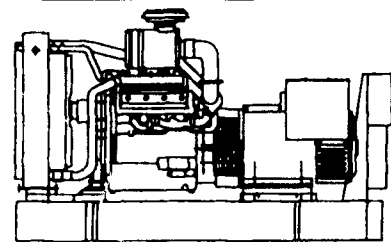
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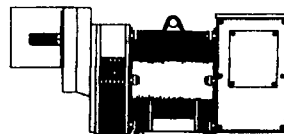
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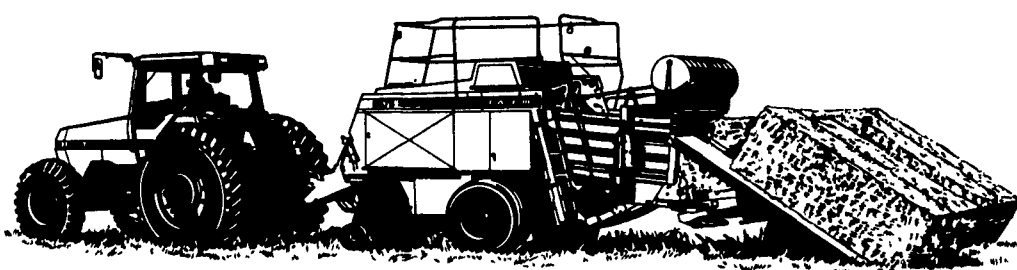


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