

The Nutrient Management Law's Impact On Mifflin County Farmers

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Since the Nutrient Management Law was enacted in October of 1997, approximately 20 Mifflin County farmers have had nutrient management plans developed.

15 farms have been completed to meet Act 6 regulations, while five have been developed voluntarily. Although these numbers are not very high, it does not mean that Mifflin County has not felt the affects of the law.

The majority of farms in the county are dairy operations. At this point we have only one dairy operation that is considered a concentrated animal operation (CAO) and has an approved nutrient management plan. However, several of the CAO's in the county are dairy farmers that decided to sell the cows and try either poultry houses or swine units of some type. If this becomes a trend, our activity concerning Act 6 will greatly increase.

Even though we have a relatively low number of CAO's in the county, public awareness concerning Act 6 seems to be very high. For example, when citizens heard of a rather large sow operation that was being proposed in their township, a "concerned citizen's group" was formed and actions

were set in motion to get the construction of the operation stopped.

Public meetings were held, the issuance of building permits delayed, and even an environmental ordinance was enacted. To date, construction of this large sow operation has never started.

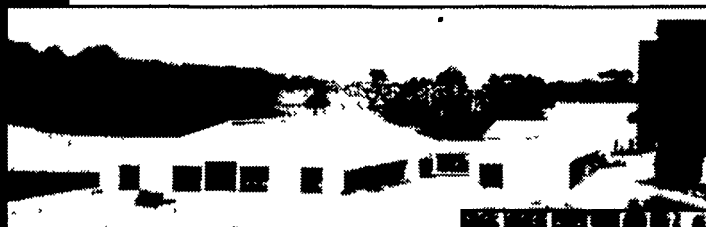
In other areas of the county where large confinement buildings have already been constructed, different issues have been raised. Emptying of the large manure storage structures that usually accompany these facilities has created some public backlash.

The conservation district normally receives a handful of complaints in the spring and in the fall regarding the spreading of manure. After odor, which there is no control over, spreading proximity to streams and property lines are usually of greatest concern. Prior to Act 6, we rarely received a complaint related to manure spreading.

However, even with all the news articles, newsletters, training seminars, and workshops that have been made available, there are still people that have not heard of the nutrient management law.

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