

Farm Bureau Program Encourages Farmers As Proud Water Partners

PARK RIDGE, Ill. — The American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) has introduced a new grassroots water quality initiative that highlights and encourages positive roles for farmers in protecting the nation's water resources.

The "Proud Water Partners" program includes insights gleaned from successful state Farm Bureau water quality efforts. Proud Water Partners encourages cooperative leadership from farmers regarding water quality issues, but also recognizes the supportive roles of other groups, government agencies and researchers who are interested in

agriculture's success and water quality.

"This dynamic water quality program rightfully puts farmers in the driver's seat," said AFBF President Bob Stallman. "Proud Water Partners shows farmers, step-by-step, how they can work through their state Farm Bureau to reach out to their neighbors and others who believe that a strong agriculture is the best way to tackle any water quality challenge."

According to Stallman, the program empowers and equips farmers to:

- Take an even more active interest in the condition of their

local water resources.

- Understand the true condition of local water resources and be familiar with the science behind such determinations.

- Address through changes in management practices any water quality challenge quantified by sound science.

- Work with government officials to correct any misidentification of water quality problems that are not supported by scientific fact.

The program includes an action notebook, which provides background on the program and the issue of water quality, step-by-step guidelines and sugges-

tions for developing farmer-focused water quality programs at the state level, and examples of programs and ideas developed by state Farm Bureaus that have already proved successful.

"It is our hope that government officials will serve as helping hands as state Farm Bureaus put this program into place," Stallman said. "We expect these cooperative steps to be far more effective and rewarding than federal proposals, such as TMDL regulations, that tend to target farmers, create adversarial relationships and foster mistrust between government and the people it serves. True to the

program's motto, America's farmers are 'Working the land. Protecting the water.' Through Proud Water Partners, farmers will further meld those two concepts into a singular action. Farmers are keenly aware of the vital roles that a healthy environment and quality natural resources play in the production of abundant, healthy, and safe food. And they know it all starts with water."

For more information about the Proud Water Partners program, contact Don Parrish, senior environmental policy specialist for AFBF, at (847) 685-8742 or your state Farm Bureau.

'Passing On The Farm' Workshop In Pottsville Dec. 13

MANHEIM (Lancaster Co.) — Transferring a family farm to the next generation seems as natural as the change in seasons. But tax traps, family squabbles, and lack of financing or business planning challenge many families attempting a transition — and outright threaten the continuation of some farms.

To help Pennsylvania farm families navigate these challenges, the Pennsylvania Farm Link and Penn State Cooperative Extension program will host a "Passing on the Farm" Workshop from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. on Dec. 13 at the Schuylkill County Extension Office.

Pennsylvania Farm Link, based in Manheim, is a nonprofit organization dedicated to ensuring the continuation of family farms.

According to the 1997 Census, three times as many farm operators are over age 65 as under 35. Just from the perspective of retirement age, one-third to one-half of farmers will retire in the next decade. How we address this problem will affect agriculture in Pennsylvania for generations to come.

Marion Bowlan, executive director of Pennsylvania Farm Link, said, "In addition to providing for our food and fiber needs, farm families provide economic stability to our rural area, protect its prime farmland, and steward the land for succeeding generations. If we want to retain family farmers as part of our rural heritage we must do more to encourage new farm entry."

"How a farmer plans for his or her successor is one of the most important lifetime decisions that farmers will make. Because it requires frank and open discussions about retirement and death, many families either delay or avoid the planning process," she said. "While it is understandable, this strategy only narrows the choices and options available to both the retiring farmer and the beginning farmer and may result in unwanted tax consequences. Perhaps the most difficult decision to make is the decision to get started. Once you have made that decision there are many individuals and organizations such as Pennsylvania Farm Link that can help you in the planning process."

These workshops are a first step. Speakers will address bringing the next generation into the farm business, farm viability, farmland preservation programs, estate planning, legal aspects of transfers, retirement planning, and financing for new farmers. In addition, farmers from the region will discuss their families' efforts to transfer their businesses to the next generation.


Lunch will be on your own at the Pottsville meeting. Please call Pennsylvania Farm Link to register for this free meeting at (717) 664-7077 by Nov. 17. The extension office is located on Rt. 901 in Pottsville. For more information on these programs or for directions, contact Farm Link at (717) 664-7077 or e-mail pafarm-link@redrose.net.

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