

Lancaster Farming

OPINION

Stewardship Rewards

Everybody wants to submit his or her 2002 Farm Bill proposals to Congress. Yet what considerations are the most worthy?

Certainly some forms of compensation programs for weak farm prices have merit. That goes almost without saying.

But we were more impressed by the efforts put forth recently in a report, "Seeking Common Ground For Conservation," a 2002 Farm Bill proposal outlined by the Soil and Water Conservation Society.

In a July 3 letter, the society, based in Ankeny, Iowa, made recommendations for reform based on five regional workshops conducted across the country last year. According to the Executive Summary in the report, "The next Farm Bill must be about more than the price of corn — or wheat, or cotton, or rice, or any other agricultural commodity. It must be about caring for the land and keeping the people who work the land on the land."

In other words, what kind of system can be in place to actually reward farmers for caring for the land? Shouldn't they be rewarded for protecting our wholesome environment?

The society wants annual funding for existing USDA conservation technical services and financial assistance programs to be doubled to about \$5 billion. That's an increase comparable to the 1985 Farm Bill, which produced dramatic reduction in soil erosion, wetland protection, and fish and wildlife habitat enhancement. But since 1985, the report asserts, conservation funding has been "flat" in constant dollars.

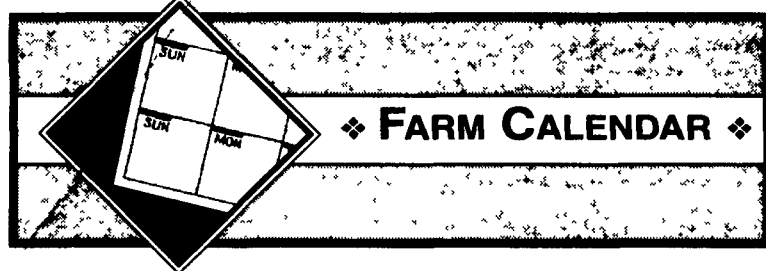
The solution: "Congress should authorize a minimum of \$3 billion annually for a stewardship-based farm and ranch program that rewards producers for utilizing their land, labor, and capital to enhance the environment," the report noted.

That's a lot of money. But we would be protecting the most valuable resource we have — our land.

Copies of the report are available on the Web at www.swcs.org.

In early February, *Lancaster Farming* advertised USDA's continuous conservation and conservation research enhancement programs. For installing stream bank fencing, producers could receive \$3,800-\$35,000 above costs — above costs! — for each half mile of stream bank enrolled in USDA buffer programs.

Aren't these programs interesting? But at the same time, you have to be amazed at how serious USDA is — and those who support programs that do all they can to protect our water and our environment.



Saturday, July 14
Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) Course, Kane, McKean County, (814) 867-9299.
Lehigh Valley Wine Trail, Fourth Anniversary Weekend, (610) 927-2505.
Wyoming and Lackawanna Counties Holstein Picnic and Barn Meeting, Bob Wilson farm, Mehoopany.

Sunday, July 15
Jefferson County Fair, thru July 21. (814) 265-0640.
Allegany County (Maryland) Fair, Cumberland, Md., (301) 729-1200.
American Chestnut and Forest Stewardship Planning, Presentations and Tours, Leffel's Tree Farm and Woodlot, Broque.

Monday, July 16
Governor's Institute for Agricultural Science Careers, Penn State Conference Center, 8 a.m.-noon.
Forest Resources Institute for Teachers, grades 3 thru 12, Sandy Lake, thru July 19.
Forest Resources Institute for Teachers, Erie County, thru July 19, (814) 563-9388.
Ag In the Classroom Conference at Penn State, University Park, (724) 458-6108.
Precision Ag and Remote Sensing Workshop, Tom Gro-

chowicz Farm, Glen Gardner, N.J., noon-2:30 p.m.

Tuesday, July 17
Pennsylvania Young Farmers Association Summer Conference, State College, thru July 18.
Jacktown Fair, Fair Grounds in Wind Ridge, thru July 21.
Precision Ag and Remote Sensing Workshop, Seiple and Sons, Easton, 10 a.m.-2:30 p.m.

Wednesday, July 18
Pasture Walk (PASA), Johnson's Provident Farm, Seasonal Dairy, Solar Pump and Soil Mineralization.
Baltimore County 4-H Fair, Cockeysville, Md., thru July 22. (410) 666-1025.
Maryland Vegetable Growers Association's Marketing Twilight Meeting, Knill's Farm Market, Mt. Airy, Md., 6:30 p.m.
Lycoming County Holstein Show, Lycoming Fairgrounds, Hughesville.

Thursday, July 19
American Coalition for Ethanol Annual Meeting and Conference, Aberdeen S.D., thru July 20.
Delaware State Fair, thru July 28, (302) 398-3269.
Potter County picnic and tour, (Turn to Page A30)



Now Is The Time By Leon Ressler

Lancaster County
Extension Director

To Enroll In The Pennsylvania Rural Leadership (RULE) Program

Applications are being accepted for the two-year leadership initiative known as The Pennsylvania Rural Leadership (RULE) Program, which helps rural residents develop leadership skills while they are working at improving their communities. The program is designed to develop skills in communication, visualization, personal leadership, and understanding of specific community issues.

The RULE program is a partnership supported by Penn State and a grant from the Governor's Center for Local Government Services as well as private grants. The program combines the resources of the Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology in Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences with experts from the public and private sec-

tors to form a leadership program for adults concerned with public issues.

RULE is accepting applications until July 30. Adults from rural areas or with rural constituencies will be judged on experience, needs, and potential. Consideration will be given to applicants' interests, diverse backgrounds, and demonstrated commitment to community involvement and solving public issues.

The first year of the training will emphasize local, regional, and state public policy issues. The second of training will focus on national and international issues. Applications and more information can be obtained by calling (814) 863-4679.

To Recycle Waste Agricultural Plastic

A lot of waste plastic is generated on today's farming operations. With the development of plasticulture production methods for many crops, summertime produces a large quantity of waste.

Plastic used to give sweet corn an early start, covers being removed from greenhouses and high tunnels, and the mulch being removed from annual strawberry production fields all contribute to this high volume of waste.

It may be tempting to pile this waste behind the barn and strike a match. However, open fires often emit high levels of particulates, acid gases, heavy metal vapors, and other toxins, some of which can cause cancer. One of the toxins given off is dioxin, which is listed as one of EPA's "dirty dozen" most toxic chemicals. Dioxin can accumulate in soils and be taken up by plants and animals and accumulate in the milk and meat.

Another compound given off is benzopyrene, which is a strong carcinogen. One study has shown open fire smoke contains 350 times as much benzopyrene as cigarette smoke. Some plastics contain addi-

tives made with metals and when burned they may emit arsenic, lead, cadmium, chromium, and mercury. Particulates are very small diameter particles of solids or liquids that remain suspended in the smoke from burning.

Particulates are a health problem because they are toxic, they interfere with the clearance mechanism of our lungs, and they can carry other toxic materials deep into our lungs. Open burning of a given amount of trash puts out 40 times the amount of particulates that the same amount of trash would emit if burned in a municipal incinerator.

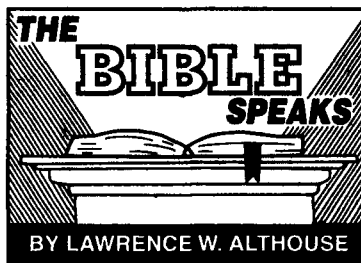
A much better option exists to take care of this plastic. This material is being collected and baled in Lancaster County for use in the production of plastic lumber. The bales of recycled plastic material will be hauled to the Trex company factory in Virginia for this purpose. There it will be mixed with waste wood chips and sawdust to produce a product for use in plastic decking.

The waste material is now being collected at the Dan Zook farm located at 183 South Farmersville Road in Leola. Any polyethylene product will be accepted, which includes plastic mulch, ag bag plastic, bale wrap, silage covers, greenhouse covers, and shrink-wrap.

Materials that are not acceptable include plastic twine, row covers, molded plastic such as greenhouse trays and pots, milk jugs, and pesticide or other containers. A \$25 per ton tipping fee will be collected when the material is delivered to the farm. This is less than half of what it would cost to take the material to the municipal incinerator in Lancaster County. Call Dan Zook (717)-656-4422 before making a delivery.

Quote of the Week:
"You must strive to multiply bread so it suffices for the tables of mankind."

— Pope John Paul II



AN ADULTEROUS PEOPLE

Background Scripture:
Hosea 1 through 2.
Devotional Reading:
Psalms 100.

Hosea is a story on two levels. There is the personal marital and parental life of Hosea the prophet and there is also the story of Israel's relationship with the Lord. Hosea's troubles with Gomer, his wife, were symbolic of God's problems with the people of Israel. The problem on both levels is unfaithfulness.

On both levels the outlook is grim and foreboding. The problem is not just that Israel has stumbled once or twice, but that it persists in its unfaithfulness' despite God's love. It is a resistant unfaithfulness, a repetitious and ruinous behavior.

It is much the same with Hosea's marriage. At God's bidding, Hosea married a woman with an undeniable reputation as a prostitute. I assume that, when Hosea married her, she promised to be faithful to him and give up her life of harlotry. In Hosea 1 there is no indication that she continued or even returned to her old ways. But in Hosea 2, the prophet proclaims, "Plead with your mother, plead — for she is not my wife, and I am not her husband — that she put away her harlotry from her face, and her adultery from between her breasts..." (2:1).

(Later, in Hosea 3, it will become clear that Gomer did, in fact, slip back into her old ways as a prostitute and adulteress, so that Hosea asserts that, although he is no longer her husband, she is still the mother of Jezreel.)

Our Infidelity

No matter what we may feel for Hosea and Gomer in their troubled marriage, the message here is about Israel's — and our — unfaithfulness to God. Hosea boldly likens the relationship of Israel to God to that of a wife to her husband. This relationship is like a marriage, founded upon mutual promises and the expectation of fidelity.

(Hosea's allusion to God as the "husband" of Israel is the first such allusion in the Old Testament; similar references are made in Isaiah 54:05, Jeremiah 3:20, and Ezekiel 16:32). The charge was not just that Israel sinned against the Lord, but that in doing so Israel was breaking its vows.

We can related to this on both a personal and corporate level. As those who have in some way pledged ourselves to follow Jesus Christ, we have made a commitment even more important and binding than the commitments we have made in marriage and other relationships.

Our transgressions are double in that we both sin and violate our commitment. I once had a parishioner — a faithful one at that — who refused to join the church because he believed he might not be able to live up to the commitment. He believed it was worse to make the commitment and not live up to it than not to make the commitment at all. I disagreed but I never won the argument.

He was at least correct in his estimation of the seriousness of commitment to the Lord.

Israel was inclined not to take their infidelity too seriously; in fact, they probably didn't see it as infidelity. So God uses Hosea to reach the

people of Israel with the seriousness of their broken commitments. He instructs Hosea to name his first child Jezreel. You may remember that Jezreel is the name of a place in Palestine where, upon the violent demise of King Ahab, the house of Jehu had been established upon the throne of Israel. Now, by naming his first son, "Jezreel," Hosea is reminding the king of what happened to the unfaithful King Ahab. "... I will punish the house of Jehu (YAY-who) for the blood of Jezreel, and I will put an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel..." (1:4)

The second child of Hosea and Gomer, a girl, is to be named "Lo-ruamah," which means "Not pitied, for I will have no more pity on the house of Israel, to forgive them at all... I will not deliver them by bow, nor by sword, nor by war, nor by horses, nor by horsemen" (1:6,7). Still, a third child was born to Hosea and Gomer, so we must assume she remained with Hosea long enough to conceive and bear three children — at the very least 27 months and probably more. The third child, a boy, God instructed the prophet, was to be named "Lo-ammi," meaning: "Not my people, for you are not my people and I am not your God" (1:8).

That's the bad news, but there is also good news if the people, like Gomer, can realize: "I will go and return to my first husband, for it was better with me than than now" (2:7b). Then, God says, "I will have pity on Not pitied, and I will say to Not my people, 'You are my people'; and he shall say, 'Thou art my God'" (2:23). That is good news for Israel and for us!

Lancaster Farming
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- PACD Media Award 1996
- Berks Ag-Business Council 2000
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