

NRCS Seeks Input On Vendors

HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will conduct a public meeting Monday, April 15 for farmers and producers regarding the use of third-party vendors. The meeting will take place at the Farm and Home Center, Lancaster, at 7:30 p.m.

The purpose of the third-party vendor meeting is to provide farmers and other USDA program participants with an opportunity to comment on obtaining technical assistance from sources outside USDA. Technical assistance includes conservation planning and the design, layout, installation, and checkout of approved conservation practices.

NRCS and conservation districts have traditionally provided technical assistance for conserva-

tion planning and practice installation, and will continue to do so. In addition to NRCS and conservation district assistance, technical assistance will also be available from individuals outside of USDA — third-party vendors.

Third-party vendors are individuals certified to provide technical assistance on behalf of USDA. The use of third-party vendors for technical assistance was authorized in the 1996 Farm Bill. The 2002 Farm Bill includes additional language on the use of third-party vendors, including payments for such assistance.

State Conservationist Robin Heard said "NRCS is committed to ensuring that technical assistance provided by NRCS, conservation districts, and third-party vendors will be quality assistance. NRCS is also committed to estab-

lishing a third-party vendor program that is farmer-friendly. Private sector technical assistance will be offered in ways that will be convenient to farmers and designed to meet their needs."

Input is needed on the specific features farmers and ranchers would like to see in the third-party vendor program. NRCS will use the opinions expressed in these meetings to broaden the availability and accessibility of technical assistance through traditional sources and third-party vendors.

For more information about the public meeting that will take place April 15, contact Gary Smith, assistant state conservationist for NRCS, at (717) 237-2204.

Penn State Dairy Expo April 20

STATE COLLEGE (Centre Co.) — The annual Penn State Dairy Expo/ Little International Livestock Show is scheduled Saturday, April 20, here at the Penn State Ag Arena.

Opening ceremonies are scheduled at 8 a.m., followed by special events, award ceremony, and a mid-day reception to honor Dr. Larry Muller at approximately 1 p.m.

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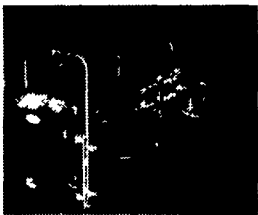


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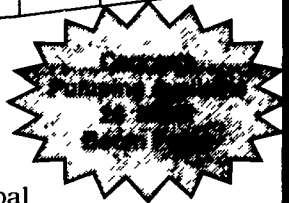
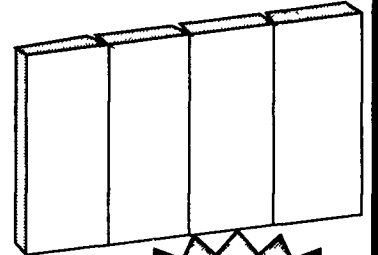
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