

New NRCS Chief Takes On Conservation Challenges

Says New Programs Are 'More Targeted'

DAVE LEFEVER
Lancaster Farming Staff

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Bruce Knight took over as chief of the National Resource and Conservation Service (NRCS) just one day before the president signed the new Farm Bill this spring.

The new job for the South Dakota grain farmer brings with it the formidable responsibility of overseeing how conservation pro-

grams will be administered across the country.

"We have a tremendous challenge ahead of us," Knight said this week.

One major goal of those programs is to preserve water quality in a nation where water issues are increasingly in the spotlight. Knight said his role, and that of the NRCS, is not to take sides with any particular approach to farming, but to offer tools that

help all farmers take care of the environment and comply with regulations, present and future.

"It's a very delicate walk to make," Knight said of his role distributing conservation resources among the country's diverse agriculture.

Conservation tools in the new Farm Bill "will fit well" with Pennsylvania farmers, he said. The bill increases funding for conservation programs by 80 per-

cent, and has "a real strong emphasis on working lands," more so than in previous farm policy, according to Knight.

He referred to the new version of the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP.) Originally crafted in 1985, this program offered strong incentives to leave farmland idle for conservation reasons. That program "didn't work too well in Pennsylvania," Knight said.

The new CREP, however, is "more targeted" to critical areas, offering bonus payments for farmers who create buffer zones to protect bodies of water, for example. This practice will not only serve to create buffers between fields and water but also "provides a buffer between (the present) and future regulations," Knight said.

He characterized the new initiatives as "voluntary, win-win practices for private lands." Federal aid will be available in several forms, including cost sharing, technical assistance, and rental payments, he said.

Some of the other programs under Knight's care include the Farmland Protection Program (for farmland preservation), the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), the Wild-



Bruce Knight

life Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP), the Wetlands Reserve Program, and assistance programs for natural disasters.

Before joining the NRCS, Knight was head of the lobbying department at the National Corn Growers Association, and has been involved in various efforts to shape federal farm policy over the past 15 years.

For more information about conservation programs, contact your county NRCS or Conservation District office. See the NRCS Web site at www.nrcs.usda.gov.

4-Hers Exhibit In Annual Jackpot Show

SANDRA LEPLEY
Somerset Co. Correspondent

MEYERSDALE (Somerset Co.) — A Lebanon County 4-H'er won the Somerset County Junior Open Jackpot Show conducted at the Somerset County Fairgrounds on Sunday, June 23.

Kyle Fleener, Robesonia, won overall grand champion steer with his prized beef named "Red." Fleener is a member of Lebanon County 4-H.

Dan Miller, Meyersdale, won overall reserve champion and also grand champion Somerset County exhibitor during the event with his steer named "Baby."

Miller's younger sister, Beth Miller, took home the reserve champion title in the county division of the competition with her steer named "Little E." Both Millers are members of Buffalo Creek 4-H in Somerset County.

The judge for the beef show was Mark Sneed of Eaton, Ohio.

Other winners for the county exhibitor's competition were Jake Wheeler, Somerset, Lacey Murray of Garrett and Shawn Troutman of Hyndman.

The show is open to all members of 4-H, Future Farmers of America (FFA) or Junior Breeder Association.

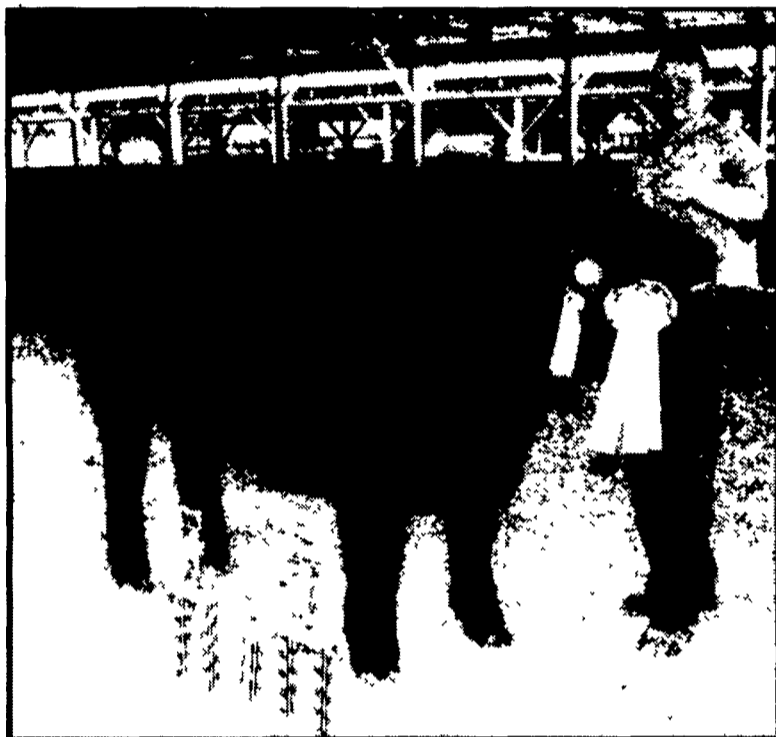
Other division champions in the Jackpot Show were Sara Jo Campbell, Sycamore, and Liz Hitz, Littlestown. Reserve champion winners were Shane Cebulak, Morgantown, W.Va.; Lacey Weimer, New Alexandria; and Jake Wheeler, Somerset.

Beth Miller also won grand champion for the Club Calf Sale competition, which involves all beef bought at the Club Calf Sale in October. Other placings went to Lynn Weimer, New Alexandria; Shawn Troutman, Hyndman; Norman Coberly, Meyersdale; and Lacey Weimer, New Alexandria.

Also conducted in conjunction with the beef show is the Somerset County Market Lamb Pro Sho, conducted on Saturday, June 22. For the first time this year, the Somerset County Market Swine Pro Sho was conducted on Friday, June 21.

Courtney Cowden, Washington County, won grand champion at the sheep show, while Forrest Ohler, Rockwood, won reserve champion.

For the Somerset County Market Swine Pro Sho, held Friday, June 21, Allyson Entz, Linden,



Dan Miller, Meyersdale, won overall reserve champion and grand champion county exhibitor at the Jackpot Show.



Kyle Fleener of Lebanon County won the supreme grand champion beef title at the Somerset County Junior Open Jackpot Show, an annual event held at the Somerset County Fairgrounds in Meyersdale on June 21, 22 and 23.

took home grand champion, while Jacob Logan, Irwin, reserve champion. The judge was Dan Willoughby of Westfield, Ind.

Lancaster County Field Day Set

HOLTWOOD (Lancaster Co.) — The "Enhancing and Sustaining Small Family Farms and Water Quality in Pennsylvania Through Regenerative Agriculture" Field Day, hosted by The Rodale Institute and Steve Groff of Cedar Meadow Farm, will take place on Friday, July 26.

The event will be conducted from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Cedar Meadow Farm, 679 Hilldale Road, Holtwood.

David E. Hess, secretary for the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) will be the guest speaker at the event.

Highlights of the day include:

- Soil Management for Water Quality on Livestock Farms presented by Ray Weil, University of Maryland;
- The Soil Food Web and Regenerative Farming presented by Don Lotter, the Rodale Institute;
- Impact of Organic Practices on Farm Economics and Water Quality presented by Jeff Moyer, The Rodale Institute; and
- tour of Cedar Meadow Farm conducted by owner Steve Groff.

Steve Groff and his family farm the 175-acres of vegetables and crops on hilly land in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania

that includes no-till, cover crops, and effective crop rotations as a way to increase profits, enhance soil and water quality, and reduce pesticides.

The cornerstone of this system is a unique emphasis on maintaining a permanent cover of crop residues and cover crops on the soil surface and having something living in the soil at all times.

The day is co-sponsored by the Pennsylvania DEP and USDA Initiative for Future Agriculture and Food Systems through the work of The Rodale Institute.

Pre-registration for the field day is required. Walk-ins will be permitted to attend, but must register upon arrival. A fee of \$15 per person includes presentations, lunch and refreshments. Additional information is available on the Rodale Institute website at www.rodaleinstitute.org.

To register, contact The Rodale Institute by phone 610-683-6009, fax 610-683-8548, or email info@rodaleinst.org. Directions are available at www.cedarmeadowfarm.com under field days.

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