Farm Progress Days Are Near

Wisconsin Farm Progress Days, the largest agriculture show in Wisconsin, is being held in Washington County for the first time. County farmers, businesses, and residents are looking forward to hosting the show and extending a welcome to over 150,000 visitors and exhibitors.

This year's theme is "Agribusiness on the Urban Edge". It is expected that this will be an opportunity to increase the awareness of agriculture to people in the urban area. Many businesses are involved in supporting the show.

The event runs from July 11 - 13th and is hosted by Dan and Margie Neuburg on their family farm near Holy Hill. The family manages a 100-cow dairy herd and farms 855 acres of alfalfa, corn, soybeans, winter wheat, oats, and red beets.

The Farm Progress Day show will provide an opportunity to focus on the stewardship of the land. A goal is to communicate to people that agricultural producers are concerned about the environment and are taking steps to protect natural resources for everyone.

The three-day outdoor event showcases the latest improvements in production agriculture, including many practical applications of recent research and technological development. There will be crop and machinery field demonstrations, Tent City which features a wide range of exhibitors, plus interesting programs and activities in the Youth and Family Living areas. There will be something of interest for the whole family.

Special Features

- Family Living Tent - educational exhibits focusing on the family
- Antique Farm Machinery
- Health screening
- Youth Tent - 4H, FFA, and other youth organizations
- Food from Farm to Table - agriculture products of Wisconsin
- Farm Progress Pavilion - agricultural and natural resources agency information
- Environmental Stewardship Tent - focuses on the stewardship of agricultural land and natural resources
- TMR Mixer Demonstrations
- Rotational Grazing Demonstrations
- Pesticide Mixing and Loading; Storage facility

We hope to see you there!
Manure Management Rules Proposed

In June of 1994, 12 persons representing farm, environmental, municipal, state and county interests were brought together on an Animal Waste Advisory committee (AWAC) to develop animal waste management guidelines. The aim was to help insure that Wisconsin's lakes and streams meet clean water standards, while maintaining a viable livestock business climate.

AWAC was challenged to develop rules to meet federal regulations (and avoid a court battle with environmental groups) as well as correct problems with the existing Animal Waste Management Program (NR 243). Four rules were recommended to accomplish AWAC goals statewide:

- No overflow of manure storage structures are allowed.
- No unconfined manure stacking within "Water Quality Management Areas".
- No unlimited livestock access to waters of the state where high concentrations of animals prevent adequate sod cover maintenance.
- No direct runoff from feedlots or stored manure to waters of the state.

Water Quality Management Areas are defined as areas of land within 300 feet along both sides of a stream, and 1000 feet around a lake. Restricting runoff from feedlots would extend to other channels that feed directly to surface or groundwater. These are the same boundaries that apply to current Shoreland Zoning Ordinances.

The next step is to draft legislative and administrative rule changes to implement the AWAC recommendations. How this will all turn out in the end is anyone's guess. However, the AWAC program recommendations may be the first "regulatory" animal waste program which has received support of agricultural groups such as Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation, the National Farmers Organization, and the Wisconsin Agribusiness Council.

It seems clear that some major program changes are on the horizon. Recent changes to the Priority Watershed Program - relating to the regulation of "critical sites" - may also be incorporated with the AWAC rules. We will try to keep you posted on all these changes.
**Landowners/Cities Team Up For Cleaner Water**

Since the Milwaukee River Watershed Program began the implementation phase in 1989, much progress has been made in the urban and rural areas. The sign-up period for cost sharing in the rural areas has recently ended. 99 cost-share agreements have been signed in Washington County since 1989, with 40 of them being completed to date. Much progress will be made when all of the conservation practices are installed over the next five years. In the next issue of this newsletter we will provide a detailed summary of rural program participation rates and the expected results on the water resources in Washington County.

In the urban areas of the watershed, over 38 communities have been awarded grants through the program to control pollution from urban runoff. Activities concentrate on construction site erosion control, stormwater management and educational programs. In Washington County, the city of West Bend and the Villages of Jackson, Germantown and Newburg are all participating in the program, involving over $1 million in grant funds so far.

Participating landowners and municipalities are congratulated for their efforts so far.

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**Informational Meeting Set For Stormwater Management/ Erosion Control**

An informational meeting has been scheduled to discuss stormwater management and construction site erosion control issues on Tuesday, August 29 from 7:00 - 9:30 P.M. at the Trenton Town Hall. All town officials and any other interested parties are invited to attend. The meeting is being jointly sponsored by the Washington County Land Conservation Department, UW - Extension and the Towns Association of Washington County.

The primary purpose of the meeting is to provide a setting for an open dialogue between local units of government on controlling runoff and water pollution from urban developments. Some of the major topics to be discussed include:

- Background/local history on the issues.
- What the general public wants or expects.
- Planning/regulatory options.
- Plan development and review procedures.
- Technical design standards.
- Inspection/enforcement mechanisms.
- Program workload and costs.
- Maintenance of stormwater management facilities.
- Local case studies.

In 1979 the county became the first unit of government in the area to adopt code language to address these issues. This was done by making provisions for construction site erosion control and stormwater management in the county’s Land Division Ordinance, which only applied to subdivisions in the unincorporated areas of the county. A lot has changed since that time, and much has been learned about the issues. This meeting will allow for a constructive exchange of experiences and facilitate discussions for future work in this area.
Conservation Plans Needed on Rented Land

Statistics show that over half of the farmland in Washington County is rented. This is common statewide especially near urban areas. Most often, this is a very informal arrangement - a cash payment, renewed on an annual basis. The landowner pays the property taxes and maintains most rights and responsibilities of the land. However, land management decisions are usually left up to the renter. This may seem to work fine, but there is an important aspect of land rental that is often overlooked.

Landowners are ultimately responsible not only for the condition of their land, but for off-site problems that mis-managed land can cause. Excessive soil erosion and water pollution from runoff are problems often associated with cropland. This is especially true on rented land, because:

- Marketable but erosion prone crops such as corn, soybeans or vegetables tend to be grown on rented land due to cash cropping, short-term rental periods, or longer travel to reach fields.

- To get the most from rental money, steep slopes, drainageways, and streamsides are often plowed and cropped.

- Unknown fertility or pest problems on rented land can result in the liberal use of fertilizers and pesticides, which may end up in our lakes, streams, or drinking water.

- To avoid losing rental payments, landowners may allow renters to farm as they wish, possible unaware of the short- or long-term environmental effects.

- Rented cropland is often "waiting" for development or has no long-term plan, making soil and water conservation a low landowner priority.

- Renters have little incentive to practice stewardship on cropland that isn't theirs, particularly if future use of the land is not guaranteed.

What happens on one field or on one farm might not seem significant, but on hundreds of farms and thousands of fields, polluted runoff adds up to serious problems.

While some are convinced that environmental regulations are the only solution to runoff pollution, there is perhaps a simpler approach. The concept is to have an "agreement" between the landowner and the renting farmer on how the land will be managed. The agreement can be as informal as a handshake or as formal as a written document that both parties sign. In either case the key component of the agreement is a CONSERVATION PLAN.

Professional conservationists are available locally to work with both the landowner and the renting farmer on the development of a Conservation Plan for the land. The plan can be designed to meet the objectives of both parties while protecting the soil, water, and related natural resources. The Conservation Plan then represents some key terms of the rental agreement. While the plan can show what has been agreed to for the next several years, it can easily be updated or modified to respond to changes that often occur.

Many conservation practices are available to help reduce soil erosion and water pollution from cropland runoff. All practices are based on county technical standards to both ensure that they work and possibly make you eligible for financial assistance.

Some conservation practices are simply changes in management and involve little or no cost, such as:

- Changes in crop rotations
- Contour plowing or stripcropping
- Nutrient and pest management
- Conservation tillage
- Buffer strips along streams

Other practices require a financial investment for land grading and other construction work:
- Grass waterways
- Terraces
- Diversions
- Sediment basins
- Grade stabilization structures

Developing a Conservation Plan for rented land should involve the landowner and the renter working closely with the conservationist. The conservationist will help you understand all terminology, concepts behind conservation practices, and plan recommendations, but YOU make the decisions. The landowner and the renter must be jointly committed to carrying out the final plan to make it work.

As a landowner, it is your responsibility to ensure the proper management of your rented land. And there is no better way to demonstrate your commitment to the environment, and to future generations, than by carrying out a Conservation Plan.

Developing a Conservation Plan costs nothing, but the benefits are long lasting. For a free fact sheet and sample rental agreement, contact the Washington County Land Conservation Department or Natural Resources Conservation Service at (414)335-4800. They will also be glad to work with you on developing a conservation plan for your land.

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**1995 Tree Program A Success - Again!**

Over 46,000 trees and shrubs and 238 pounds of prairie seed were sold through this year's program. Tree tubes are becoming more popular, as they help guard against deer, rodent, and rabbit damage.

If you missed getting an order in, and are interested, let us know. We will add you to our mailing list for next year's program (order forms are usually mailed out in early December).

For those of you who have ordered plants or seed from us - a sincere THANK YOU! Your purchase helps the environment directly through your planting efforts, and indirectly by helping support Land Conservation Department activities.
Conservation easements are tailored somewhat to each site. However, there is a standard list of items that are normally required.

NOTE: The Following Restrictions Apply Only Within the Easement Area Boundary.

The landowner gives up the right to:
- plant or harvest crops
- graze livestock
- build structures
- dump or stockpile offensive material
- post signs
- disturb the natural landscape
- alter existing drainage or water levels

The landowner gives permission to the purchaser to:
- manage vegetative cover
- install livestock fencing, if necessary
- control soil erosion problems
- modify streambanks for fish habitat
- post a sign if public access is allowed

Public access is generally required on a conservation easement, but may not be required depending on the site.

A number of government programs and private organizations are involved in purchasing conservation easements from landowners. Two programs funded through the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) are the Stewardship Program and the Priority Watersheds Program. Through these two programs, a local unit of government may purchase a conservation easement with financial support from the DNR, or the DNR could buy the easement directly from the landowner. Both programs focus on improving water quality.
Easements are recorded on the deed of the property and are automatically transferred to any new owner. They do not prevent the sale or inheritance of a property.

Conservation easements purchased through the Priority Watersheds Program are available during the standard eight year program implementation period. In Washington County this includes all of the Milwaukee River watersheds. If purchased through the Stewardship Program, the time schedule may vary.

A conservation easement can be tailored to each property, thus making it acceptable to the landowner, while costing the public less than an outright land purchase. In the end, everyone benefits from the easement and, ultimately, from the preservation of our natural resources.

Those landowners who received this letter are encouraged to take advantage of the cost-sharing. This fall may be the most convenient time to begin soil testing activities.

The cost-share rate is 50% of all eligible costs, over a 3 year period which includes:

- routine soil testing
- residual nitrogen soil testing
- manure nutrient analysis
- crop consulting services for preparation and implementation of the plan

The nutrient management plans must meet the minimum requirements in Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) technical standard 590 and Technical Note - Conservation Planning - WI - 1. Soil testing methods and nutrient budget calculations must follow University of Wisconsin-Extension (UWEX) publication A2809. Nutrient management plans must be prepared by an individual certified through at least one of a number of approved programs.

A list of qualified consultants was included in the mailing. It is up to each farmer to decide who they hire. However, a meeting with the consultants showed that their schedules are very full, so act early!

For any questions, ask for Paul, Troy, or Scott at the LCD office (414)335-4800

Watershed Program Emphasizes Nutrient Management

Letters recently went out to about 80 farmers in Washington County that are eligible for new cost-sharing being offered through the Milwaukee River Watershed Program for developing and following a nutrient management plan. The purpose is to promote efficient use of nutrients from commercial fertilizer, manure, legumes and other organic sources, while protecting our lakes, streams, and groundwater resources.
In This Issue

Farm Progress Days Are Near. .............................. 1
Manure Management Rules Proposed .................... 2
Landowners/Cities Team Up for Cleaner Water .......... 3
Informational Meeting Set for Stormwater Mgt./Erosion Control 3
Conservation Plans Needed on Rented Land. .......... 4
1995 Tree Program A Success ......................... 5
Conservation Easements Help Preserve Stream Corridors 6
Watershed Program Emphasizes Nutrient Management. 7