



Agriculture Newsletter
Winter 2015



**Farmer
Open House Days**

The Jefferson Conservation District is hosting Farmer Open House Days at the District Office

Tuesday, February 10th
Thursday, February 12th
9am - Noon both days

During open house days, you'll have the opportunity to:

- ✓ See what agricultural services are available to you from agencies including the Conservation District, Natural Resource Conservation Service, Farm Service Agency, and Penn State Extension.
- ✓ Work on your Manure Management and Agriculture Erosion & Sedimentation Plans with assistance readily at hand if needed.
- ✓ Create maps of your operation.
- ✓ Discuss what improvements you'd like to make or already have made on your farm, and see what kind of financial assistance programs are available for these projects.
- ✓ Obtain FREE soil test kits. Limited supply.



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Ag E&S Plan Development Using PAOneStop

PA Chapter 102 Regulations of the Clean Streams Law (Erosion & Sedimentation Control Regulations) require all farms that plow and/or till (including no-till) more than 5,000 ft² and/or have an Animal Concentration Area that disturbs more than 5,000 ft² to have a written Agricultural Erosion & Sedimentation Control Plan (Ag E&S Plan).

PAOneStop (www.paonestop.org), a free online farm planning program developed by Penn State, now has the capabilities to help you develop an Ag E&S Plan for your operation. The program can calculate an estimated *actual* soil loss rate from each of your fields based on management and field characteristics and compare it to the *tolerable* soil loss rate. Erosion and Sedimentation Control Regulations require that the estimated *actual* soil loss rate not exceed the *tolerable* soil loss rate (T) over the planned crop rotation.



What is the Tolerable Soil Loss Rate (T) ???

The tolerable soil loss rate (T) is the maximum estimated rate at which soil can be lost and still sustain plant productivity over time (measured in tons/acre/year). The Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) has assigned T-values for each soil type in the United States (values range from 1-5) based on soil characteristics. Soils with a T-value of 5 are characterized as permeable, well-drained, deep soils. Soils with a T-value of 1 are characterized as shallow soils with poor permeability.

It's important not to confuse the *tolerable* soil loss rate with the *actual* soil loss rate that PAOneStop calculates. The goal is to keep the *actual* soil loss rate (factors in land management) from exceeding the tolerable soil loss rate (*does not* factor in land management), in each of your fields.

What can I do to prevent excess soil loss in my fields?

Keeping the soil covered is one of the best measures you can take to prevent excessive soil loss from your fields. Listed below are a few best management practice that can help you achieve this goal.

- ✓ Using no-till
- ✓ Including additional years of hay in your crop rotation
- ✓ Leaving corn residue in the fields
- ✓ Using contour strips with alternating close grown crops (small grain, hay)
- ✓ Incorporating cover crops into your rotation

Resources

- National Soils Handbook 618.66, T Factor
- Impacts of Technology on U.S. Cropland and Rangeland Productivity, Congress of the U.S., Office of Technology Assessment
- A written plan that meets "T" over the rotation, USDA-NRCS
- PAOneStop, www.paonestop.org



Managing Animal Concentration Areas (ACAs)

ACAs are defined as areas that cannot maintain vegetation due to animal congregation (barnyards, sacrifice lots, watering areas, exercise lots, etc.). They have the potential to pollute waterways from excess soil and manure runoff, and cause animal health problems. Listed below are several guidelines to follow to help keep your animals healthy and protect nearby waterways from contamination:

- Divert clean water flow from upslope fields, driveways, barn roofs, etc. away from the ACA.
- Direct polluted runoff or allow it to flow from the ACA area into a storage facility or best management practice such as a correctly sized and well maintained vegetative filter strip.
- Limit animal access to surface waters to only properly implemented livestock crossings.
- Minimize the size of denuded areas.
- Keep congregation areas such as feed racks and gates as far away from surface water as practical.
- Relocate movable structures creating ACAs, such as hay rings, at least annually where practical, to minimize ACA development and manure concentration.
- Routinely, generally four times per year, remove accumulated manure from ACAs, where practical, to minimize potential for polluttional discharges.



18th Annual Northwest PA Grazing Conference

This year's conference, "Finding More Greens in Your Grazing" will be held on Thursday, March 19, 2015 at the Zion Church in Clarion, PA, featuring Paul & Phyllis Van Amburgh of Sharon Springs, NY. Topics of discussion will include Holistic Management, Fencing, The Benefits of Stockpiled Forages, Meat Marketing & Labeling, and EQIP Funding. Registration is required by March 6, 2015. Cost is \$30.00 (payable to Headwaters RC&D Council) and includes a continental breakfast and a hot buffet lunch. To register or to request more information, contact Headwaters RC&D at (814) 503-8653, or visit their website at www.headwaterspa.org.

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