

\*What Heritage Do We Pass Onto the Next Generation

Thanks for asking me back to participate in this your 36th annual meeting. I was on your program for the 25th meeting, 11 years ago, on November 16, 1971 at Sturbridge. Earlier, in 1971 National Land Use Policy bills had been introduced in the U.S. Congress. They did not become law, but a great deal has happened in soil and water conservation and land use in that decade of the 1970's, especially at the non-federal level.

> I am privileged as a private citizen, after over forty years of public service to Agriculture, to now be on the other side of the fence. That recent transition has opened up new challenges in soil and water conservation and farmland retention for me as Senior Advisor to the American Farmland Trust. A private, nonprofit organization, with 25,000 members, AFT is committed to the protection of important farmland and of farming opportunities through public policy development and providing land use information.

I am also honored to have become a member of the governing board of my own local conservation district in Anne Arundel County, Maryland in June of this year. I salute you who govern your 16 Conservation Districts.

> I have, as a career conservationists, enjoyed serving the biggest business in America -- agriculture. It is basic to all other human activities. Agriculture is the basis for human survival -- a prime contributor to human effort -- a recognized factor in human dignity. The American farmer is by far the most productive in the world. U.S. farmers begin with the world's best combination of natural resources for farming. I realize this anew every time I travel here and abroad.

\*Material used for a talk by Norman A. Berg, Senior Advisor, American Farmland Trust at 36th Annual Meeting of the Massachusetts Association of Conservation Districts, November 5, 1982 at Chicopee, Massachusetts.

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Thanks for the opportunity to participate in this important program. Your theme "Challenges for Tomorrow's Agriculture" is both pertinent and timely. Most Americans simply do not comprehend the magnitude of our Nation's agricultural achievements.

As a recent issue of Context, published by DuPont, says, "the American Farmer (is) our most under-rated hero". A recent survey by the Accokeek Foundation also led to the following observation by those who were interviewed - quote, "The Maryland farmer is informed, intelligent, thoughtful and articulate."

In Aug. > So knock on it if it stands as an inspiration for any spdr  
> It was my good fortune to be on the program at Purdue University in August where Kansas State University Extension Economist B.L. Flinchbaugh keynoted the National Institute for Cooperative Education. He said, "Wise and prudent people have a vision of the future fashioned by creative open minds with a working knowledge of the lessons of the past. They neither ignore the past nor worship it. They dream the impossible. Today let us analyze the past and explore the future fully aware that tomorrow will be different than today; that our institutions and traditions that served us well in the past must be adapted to the future or given a decent burial. The status quo will not be preserved." - Dedicate what I say to the memory of EXT DIR Gene McMurtry

Harvard  
A most astute and esteemed mentor, one of my professors while a student at this university, will celebrate his 82nd birthday in a few weeks. He observed that when he was 25 what the world needed most was youth, vigor, irreverence for tradition and new and creative ideas. By <sup>my</sup> age 64 he had changed his mind. What the world needed most was experience, wisdom, reverence for the past and traditional values and new and creative ideas.

Notice the subtlety, "and new and creative ideas". What the world needs now is a productive blend of youth and vigor, age and wisdom, and understanding

\*Material used for talk by Norman A. Berg, Senior Advisor, American Farmland Trust, at the 1982 Agricultural Leaders Forum at the University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland, November 4, 1982.

and appreciation for the past, willingness to shed tradition, to dream the impossible and to look far beyond the horizon!

This message must ring loud and clear throughout the land among the nation's producers of the basic necessities of life - food and fiber." *Hanneman,*  
This message must also be heard by those who have served farmers and consumers so well for many decades. It is necessary for survival. *R.* Therefore, I am privileged, to have over forty years of public service to Agriculture, and to now be on the other side of the fence as a private citizen. That recent transition has opened up new challenges in soil and water conservation and farmland retention for me as Senior Advisor to the American Farmland Trust. A private, nonprofit organization, with 25,000 members, AFT is committed to the protection of important farmland and of farming opportunities through public policy development and providing land use information.

I am also honored to have become a member of the governing board of my own local conservation district in Anne Arundel County, Maryland in June of this year. *I salute you - so strong - who are elected to govern your 16 Cons. Districts in Md.*  
As a career conservationist, I enjoy serving the biggest business in America -- Agriculture. It is basic to all other human activities. Agriculture is the basis for human survival -- a prime contributor to human comfort -- a recognized factor in human dignity. The American farmer is by far the most productive in the world. U.S. farmers begin with the world's best combination of natural resources for farming, ranching and forestry. I realize this anew every time I travel here and abroad.

For instance, only Western Europe rivals North America in growing grain for export. Bathed with gentle rains from the Gulf Stream, Europe has near-ideal climate for wheat and other small grains. But much of Europe is mountainous, so its arable soil is limited.

If soil were all, Russia rather than the U.S. might lead the world in grain exports. But Russias' climate is near to impossible. Often there is too little rain in June when it's needed, and fall frosts and/or rains are more likely to come before or during harvest. The Russians have long blamed their crop failures on climate and weather. However, the Worldwatch Institute of Washington, D.C., in a recent study now says only drastic changes in Communist philosophy and attitudes could check further declines in food production and satisfy the desires of their people for a better standard of living.

China comes closest to matching our natural resources of soil and sunshine, but rainfall is short, crop needs must be supplemented with spring irrigation. While Chief of SCS, I sent several teams of U.S.A. natural resource experts to China. <sup>4000 years - 1 Bk people.</sup> They reciprocated by allowing their soil and water leaders to visit our farms and ranches. U.S. visitors to China saw that large forest areas have been denuded, lakes and streams have been polluted. Substantial soil erosion and loss of arable land have occurred as China expanded and upgraded production from its farms, factories and utilities.

A professor of geography at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg, Canada, Dr. Vaclav Smil, as consultant to the World Bank, in a recent study confirms observations that a "grain first" policy, although now producing about 70% more grain per year than in the late 1950's, is causing widespread and serious damage to its natural environment. The most serious impact has been the reported loss of 30% of that country's farmland in the past two decades. We are again reminded that the world's best cropland is the foundation not only of agriculture, but of civilization itself.

As I continually emphasize, prime and important farmlands are a national, <sup>natural</sup> resource with their unique combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oil seed crops. That land has the soil depth and quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to economically

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The world's best cropland is the foundation not only of agriculture, but of civilization itself. And as I continually emphasize, it is a *natural* national resource with the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oil seed crops. It has the soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to economically produce sustained high yields of crops when properly managed. Although the U.S. has land -- over 2.2 billion acres, 1.3 billion as agricultural land -- less than 350 million acres meets the criteria as prime farmland, therefore, the Nation's prime, unique and important farmlands used for agriculture represent an asset of great value. It should be retained for agriculture forever. I know of your interest and concern, 5.7 million people on a little over 5 million acres of land represents real pressure. Especially on the 448,000 acres considered as prime farmland. Each year about 12,000 acres of agricultural land moves to some other use. Adding to the problem is the 3 million tons of Massachusetts soil that washes away due to erosion.

You join others throughout the Nation who are also concerned. At a recent conference sponsored by the Accokeek and the Wallace Genetic Foundations in Maryland on the future of agriculture in the Northeast that Fred Winthrop and I attended, the 16 rural leaders assembled said that farmland preservation advocates were "people talking to themselves". A call was voiced to join with others if land retention goals were to be realized.

In recent years, Massachusetts has taken important steps to retain a significant farmland base. Your Farmland Assessment Act of 1973 removed some of the pressure to sell farmland, but it was a stop gap action. The Agricultural Preservation Restriction Act (APR) of 1977 allows a farmer

to realize the equity "locked up" in the land without destroying the farm. The panel on Agr. Retention reported good progress.

The fight for government actions on behalf of farmland retention often is led by professional planners and by rural newcomers whose economic lifelines were to the cities, but who wanted to preserve the pastoral scenes that, in part, attracted them to their new homes.

This is a reflection of the intensively urbanized nature of the region and the mobility of its people. The new countryside is composed of a wide variety of elements - part-time farmers, small farmers, rural-supporting services, people engaged in processing and transporting the products of the land, operators of woodlots and fisheries, among others. A large and growing non-farm population. <sup>160 years</sup> Many vacation homes and recreation uses of the area contribute to this mixture of activities. The land and waters of the area are important habitats for wildlife and other natural resources.

Although conventional farming continues to dominate this region's agriculture the <sup>growth</sup> burgeoning of small farms, responsive to expressed desires for continuity and independence, family-owned, many of them part-time operations, often both diversified and intensive in production represent something both new and significant. They appear to be the main factor that <sup>will</sup> ~~has~~ reversed the decline in the number of farms in the region as well as an important key to its future.

\* Commerical agriculture in the Northeastern states region is especially menaced by competition with other commerical agriculture nationwide, and with the rising land prices, labor and other regional factors.

The problems associated with tenancy <sup>do</sup> also remain, especially the short-term nature of land improvements and the uncertain future of



contractual arrangements. Further, the <sup>is</sup> need to sustain the agricultural service structure, and social and cultural institutions related to agriculture that are as important for large-scale farming enterprises as well as for small farms needs attention.

However, agriculture <sup>r</sup> is lagging far behind urban areas, industry and other sectors of the national life, and weakly equipped to deal with the problems it faces.

\* The over-production of some categories of crops and the resulting <sup>5.3 6.4 but if corn</sup>  
<sup>2.3 " " say beans</sup>  
<sup>2.4 " " all wheat</sup>  
 surpluses and depressed prices has raised the question of how much land is really needed for the region's agriculture. Criteria is needed as to how land more in demand for recreation, environmental protection and other uses can be identified. Little land use planning responsive to these factors is being done at regional, state or local levels, but a beginning has been made in a recent Massachusetts statewide survey. I agree w

<sup>High Davis</sup> A lacking element <sup>in a</sup> rural development policy that sets the stage for land use decisions, and presents a convincing picture of future developments, that will guide investment, settlement and land use decisions. Such definition of the farmland problem could lead to more generally agreed on goals and unity among many separate local programs.

The bottom line on land use is that little is likely to affect current trends in farmland conversion until it commands action at the level of local government <sup>and</sup> farmers do not believe they should shoulder the entire burden.

In a series of interviews with representative Maryland farmers it was found that farmers are suspicious of farmland preservation programs. Those programs that succeed have been led by farmers. The way farmers view their land - both as a commodity and a means of production, and as their principal equity in the farm - was seen as fundamental to any

*Wendy Apr*  
realistic effort to enlist farm support for programs greatly desired by many other interest.

I stress several realities that *myself & others* experience tells us to deal with early. - *You are doing this - I go to where you are.*

> *accept that people* First, growth is usually good for the economy, for when people who need and want better shelter, have jobs, can buy new homes and the appliances, furniture, rugs and draperies for those homes many industries benefit along with the builders, the bankers and the brokers of real estate. Growth, of course, will need land and water.

During this time of *a slow economy* recession for many, especially home builders, developers and cash grain farmers, we can work together to help solve mutual problems. We have a little time. Therefore, when there is talk about retention of important farmlands for agricultural use, it cannot come on as "anti-growth, anti-development." We would turn off many potential friends, including those landowners who are now in farming, ~~ranching~~ or forestry as their business. *They see in* ~~It too is~~ a high risk business.

> Second, the main objective of programs aimed at farmland retention must continue to focus on helping farmers, ~~ranchers~~ and foresters to make and keep that way of life attractive and that includes income that exceeds costs on the balance sheet.

Third, farmland protection must be cast in the general context of overall local growth management and resource development programs. Appropriate recognition for community, commercial and industrial development, housing (including low and moderate income needs) and other environmental concerns, as well as agriculture will increase the chance of success for all activities. The real world is that no program can be enacted nor continue to be effective without needed broad political support.



Political strength for agriculture can be mobilized by forming a new concert of interests, based on a common view of the future as well as mutuality of interests. *Wrap in concerns for } Soil loss*

Finally, *Reality &* the conversion of important farmlands to non-farm uses is a result of over at least a decade of time of complex factors that include:

- Urban growth needs;
- Government programs and incentives;
- Regulations (zoning);
- Land values and taxes;
- Agricultural productivity, profitability and the land conversion that results from landowners personal decision about work, family and retirement.

Therefore, because the loss of farmland to other uses is the result of many factors over an extended period of time, farmland retention programs should and will be many faceted. The NALS work documented this in detail.

As action has shifted from the Federal to the state and local levels, farmland preservation is a unique area where the private sector is finding opportunities. The growing popularity of development rights acquisition and *per* transfer is an illustration, especially in a situation where individual landowners make decisions one at a time about land use, and regulation is in the hands of local government.

There is no general or right answer to the proper distribution of government roles in planning or governing land use. The environmental movement has shifted responsibility for land use planning above the local level on some issues, i.e. air and water quality, hazardous waste

disposal, radioactive emissions, even water and wind erosion of topsoil where they do not fit within governmental boundaries.

This creep upward has been strongly resisted. The further away from home the planners and regulators live, the more offensive their standards become to the home folks. Moreover, the land owners and enterprises affected by the plans have much greater influence on the local levels of government. There is a constant tug of war that is most consistent with our democracy as the levels of government sort out what works and what

doesn't. *There are no shortcuts - Pres Nixon for 16-100 yrs*

*To grow a beautiful tree - 3 mths to produce a fruit*  
In my own experience, local and state governments do not usually

adopt land use policies because of fear of some potential global food problems. There are usually much more immediate and locally visible problems that prompt action.

Congress passed the Farmland Protection Policy Act last year. It is part of the Agriculture and Food Act of 1981. This legislation, essentially, does three things:

- It requires that agencies of the Federal Government refrain from converting farmland to nonagricultural uses whenever there are practicable alternatives for meeting their needs for Federal facilities.
- It prohibits the use of Federal Government financial or technical assistance by private developers or investors on projects that would convert farmland to other uses whenever there are practicable alternatives to meet legitimate growth and development needs.

-- It requires that agencies of the Federal Government assure that any projects they wish to construct or for which they are providing financial or technical assistance are being undertaken consistent with locally or State approved plans, programs, or policies for retaining farmland.

The legislation does not apply to projects undertaken for national defense, and it recognizes, up front, that it is the prerogative of State and local governments to regulate land uses in the public interest. The legislation specifically forbids any agency of the Federal Government from regulating the use of land except that which is owned or held in trust by the Federal Government.

I think these are the appropriate things for the Federal Government to do in addressing the issue. We must retain an adequate supply of cropland on which to produce food and fiber for domestic consumption and foreign trade and for production of strategic and essential industrial materials that are agriculturally produced. In doing this, we must be looking 50 years or more into the future. Future generations have a large stake in what we do today.

Most forecasters overlook the reality that the federal establishment usually adopts the policy that allows the difficult consequences to be manifested after the next election.

However -