



Berks County Farm Bureau Berks Newsletter

Elizabeth Peifer, Editor

Fall Edition  2016

The newsletter is always available online at www.pfb.com/berks

Thanks to those of you who have opted to receive your newsletter electronically. So far, 2% of our members have agreed to stop their paper/snail-mail newsletters. We encourage you to help us move into the 21st century by letting us know that you want electronic only, or that you'd still prefer the paper version.

Please e-mail
BerksCoFBnews@aol.com to let us know your preference: paper vs. email/online.

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Fall Banquet & Annual Meeting

September 30, 2016

6:45 Registration, 7:00 Dinner

Adults \$10 - Children 10 and under FREE



Banquet Menu: Ham, Potato Filling, Salad, Apple Sauce, Corn,
Lima Beans, Strawberries & Ice Cream

Fleetwood Grange

2864 Moselem Springs Road • Fleetwood PA

(there are road detours in Fleetwood so allow time to get lost)

Make reservations by September 15th:

Robin Lincoln • 315 S. Baumstown Road

Birdsboro, PA 19505 • Phone: 484-925-4132

Great Food, Election of Directors, Voting for Polices for 2017 and door prizes!

Don't miss your chance to propose and vote on policies to be promoted by Farm Bureau in the year ahead. All Regular Members can present and vote on policies. Management doesn't choose what's important, WE DO!

See our website www.pfb.com/berks for a listing of policies proposed as of our September 9th Board Meeting.

ELECTIONS!!!

We will be holding elections at our Annual Meeting & Banquet on September 30th.

If you are interested in serving on our Board of Directors,

please contact Nominating Committee chair Dwayne Salem at 717-305-8240.



Mobile Ag Lab

The Mobile Ag Lab was a big hit at the Reading Fair last month. Sponsored by Berks Co Farm Bureau, the Ag Lab was open for children of all ages to enter and learn. A big shout out to Jaimie Reinhard and the Reading Fair board for suggesting and managing this Ag Lab outing.



Measure the Candidate

Thursday, October 6, 2016, 7:30 p.m.

Berks Co Ag Center

1261 Welfare Road • Leesport, PA 19533

Bring your friends and family. Become informed voters.

See and hear the people you are voting for.

Get your own questions answered.

Refreshments will be served following the program.

Voting is a right, a privilege and a responsibility.

Election Day is November 8, 2016.

Supreme Court Ruling Sides With Landowners in Clean Water Challenge

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled landowners can challenge the federal government when the Army Corps of Engineers tries to dictate land use with regulations aimed at water quality.

Landowners have made attempts to challenge Corps rulings known as jurisdictional determinations. However, the federal government argued those determinations were not final, and as a result, lawsuits were dismissed. But the Supreme Court’s determination preserves a landowner’s right to challenge Corps determinations.

“When a farmer or rancher gets a jurisdiction determination issued by the Corps of Engineers and they believe the Corps overstepped the bounds of the Clean Water Act, they can file a lawsuit in federal court, after they exhaust all of their administrative remedies,” said Danielle Quist, senior counsel for the American Farm Bureau Federation. AFBF filed a “friend of the court” brief in the case—in support of the plaintiffs.

The ruling highlights the difficulty that landowners can find themselves in if a landscape feature is determined to be a “water of the United States” by the Corps. Farmers face fines of up to \$37,500 a day for Clean Water Act violations—and often face years of challenges in trying to get a permit.

General Assembly Passes Bill to Correct Assessment Flaws in Clean and Green Program

The Pennsylvania General Assembly adopted legislation strongly supported by Farm Bureau, which will make two major and positive changes in valuation of properties enrolled Clean and Green. House Bill 806, introduced by Rep. Martin Causer, who chairs the House Agriculture & Rural Affairs Committee, was signed by Gov. Tom Wolf.

The Clean and Green Act is supposed to provide a reduced property tax rate for properties used in production agriculture, forestry or dedicated for open space. But in several counties, landowners in Clean and Green are being assessed a higher tax value than what would be assessed if the property wasn’t enrolled. House Bill 806 will prohibit Clean and Green properties from receiving a higher tax assessment than assigned by the county under fair market value. The bill will also prohibit a county from making yearly increases in Clean and Green values in any year that the county has not done a countywide reassessment of all properties. The change will eliminate in the future the substantial annual increase in property taxes that has occurred on Clean and Green properties whose counties adjusted values each year.

Find out more about these and other Member Benefits and Services at www.pfb.com



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Vance Getz - 717-945-6645

David Mory - 610-419-0250
Jason Seibert - 717-274-0217



Berks County Nationwide Agents

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Richard McFeely
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610-777-2224

Jeffrey Spotts *
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Lawmakers Fix Inheritance Tax Law and Address Other Agriculture Tax Issues

Recent legislative action by the Pennsylvania General Assembly is correcting a problem resulting from interpretation of the state's inheritance tax law that exempted farm business from paying the tax. In addition, lawmakers also address two other tax issues beneficial to farm families.

The General Assembly passed Farm Bureau-supported legislation in 2012 to eliminate the state's inheritance taxes on family farmers. However, technical interpretations by the Pennsylvania Department of Revenue made since the law passed have limited the opportunity for many farm families to benefit from the tax exemption. Transfers of farm assets and ownership shares in the family farm business did not qualify for inheritance tax exemption if the transfer involved a corporation or trust. PFB worked to change the law to clarify that agriculture and small businesses, regardless of their business structure, should be exempt from paying inheritance taxes.

A provision was included in the state's tax code, adopted as part of the new state budget, closes the loophole. The change was made retroactive to when the farm exemption went into effect. Families who paid the inheritance tax based on the Department of Revenue's interpretation should be able to apply for and obtain tax refunds.

Lawmakers also passed legislation to clarify the exemption of realty transfer taxes from being applied to conservation easement purchases and exempted sales tax from being applied to equipment used for timbering. Pennsylvania Farm Bureau thanks the efforts of Sen. John Gordner, who led a multi-year fight to close the loophole and prevent farm families from having to pay the inheritance tax.

- 2.5 percent increase for Penn State Extension
- 10 percent increase for agriculture promotion, education and exports
- 10 percent increase for hardwoods research and promotion
- 10.2 percent increase for livestock and dairy shows
- 10 percent increase for PA Preferred
- 2.5 percent increase for veterinary activities through the University of Pennsylvania.
- \$100,000 for the Center for Agricultural and Shale Law PFB thanks Senators Jake Corman and Elder Vogel for their efforts in securing funding for agriculture priority issues.

Rosetree Consulting *Agricultural • Environmental*

Rosetree Consulting provides soil sampling, crop consulting, and government regulatory documents for agricultural operations of all sizes. Our goal is to provide clients with the information and understanding needed to make better decisions and have a more profitable operation.

Rosetree Consulting offers a 5% discount on regulatory services (manure management plans, nutrient management plans, conservation plans, odor management plans) to Berks County Farm Bureau members.
Eric Rosenbaum: 484-788-7263

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IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER

DATE	EVENT	LOCATION	TIME
September 9	BCFB Board Meeting	Ag Center, Leesport, PA	7:00pm
September 30	BCFB Annual Meeting	Fleetwood Grange	Registration 6:45pm; Dinner 7:00pm
October 6	Measure the Candidate	Ag Center, Leesport, PA	7:30pm
October 14	BCFB Board Meeting	Ag Center, Leesport, PA	7:30pm
November 8	General Election		
November 11	BCFB Board Meeting	Location to be determined	7:30pm
November 14-16	PA Farm Bureau Annual Meeting	Hershey, PA	
December 9	BCFB Board Meeting	Ag Center, Leesport, PA	7:30pm
Jan 6 – 11 2017	AFBF Annual Convention	Phoenix, AZ	

Biotechnology Labeling Bill Approved

Congress approved a bill to create national standards for the labeling of food products containing genetically modified organisms. The bill received approval in the Senate 63 to 30 and in the House 306 to 117. It was recently signed by President Obama.

The bill creates a mandatory labeling, but prevents a patchwork of state-by-state laws by creating national standards. In addition, the bill directs the U.S. Department of Agriculture to develop labeling standards. Meat and dairy would not fall under the labeling law, even if the animals were fed GMO feed. It would also exempt products such as soup where meat is a primary ingredient. The USDA will have no authority to recall products that do not comply with labeling requirements. Farm Bureau supported the legislation.

"Genetically engineered crops have a decades-long track record of safety and benefits for agricultural productivity and our environment. This legislation helps to continue those benefits by avoiding the confusion of differing and potentially misleading labeling standards from state to state," said AFBF President Zippy Duvall.

State Budget Finalized

Pennsylvania lawmakers reached agreement on a new \$31.6 billion spending plan and revenue package that provides support for agriculture but does not call for broad-based tax increases. Members of the Pennsylvania General Assembly approved, in early July, the spending package which Gov. Tom Wolf allowed to become law. Nearly two weeks later, lawmakers voted on a funding package to pay for the agreed upon spending, which Gov. Wolf signed.

The tax bill also clarifies that all farm families, regardless of their business structure, should not be subject to the state's inheritance tax and realty transfer taxes not be applied to conservation easement purchases. The budget agreement does not call for an increase in sales or personal income taxes. Instead, lawmakers turned to an increased and expanded cigarette tobacco taxes, additional gambling options, reforms in the state's liquor system and more to pay for new spending. The budget does not address pension

or property tax reform. However, it contains positive news for priority agriculture areas.

Educator's Ag Institute Brings Farming to the Classroom

Teachers from across Pennsylvania spent time in State College exploring the myriad of ways to include agriculture in lesson plans. The Educator's Ag Institute, organized by the Pennsylvania Friends of Agriculture Foundation, gives educators the tools to bring agriculture alive in their classrooms through a variety of lesson plans and workshops. Those lesson plans are adaptable for all types of curriculum and grade levels. Teachers also had the chance to tour nearby farms and research facilities at Penn State.

The foundation also recognized three educators for their efforts to promote agriculture to students. During the institute, the Pennsylvania Friends of Agriculture Foundation recognized Lisa Klipa, a teacher at Praise Christian Academy in Allegheny County, as the Teacher of the Year. The award is given annually to an educator who does an outstanding job incorporating agriculture into their curriculum.

Member Benefit Spotlight Grainger Provides Everyday Savings for Members

Ken Shiderly was shocked when he realized the money he could save with his Grainger discount. Shiderly, who owns Ken Shiderly Construction, Inc. in Lawrence County, is a Pennsylvania Farm Bureau member. He decided to use his Grainger discount available through Farm Bureau when placing an order. He learned of the discount after attending a Farm Bureau meeting.

Grainger has recently expanded their Farm Bureau discount program to include free shipping on all orders-- whether made in-person, over the phone, or online. Farm Bureau members also receive at least a 30 percent discount when shopping with Grainger. When Shiderly called in to place his order, he was very pleased with the way he was treated by the Grainger representative.

Cross Country Road Trip Honors Farmers

By the time she's 25, Natalina Sents expects to visit all 50 states. And in doing so, she'll be telling the stories of the men and women of agriculture. Sents, a recent graduate of Iowa State, is in the midst of a cross-country journey documenting American agriculture. She's writing about the farmers she meets, documenting their lives on a blog and on social media.

Sents hopes by May of next year, she will have visited every state in the nation, interviewing at least two farmers in each state for the "Why I Farm" blog. Her journey is supported in part by Beck's Hybrids, a seed company that started "Why I Farm" to honor American farmers. Sents spent time in Pennsylvania in June, visiting the Haldeman Farm in Dauphin County—Farm Bureau members who grow grains—along with an orchard and hops farm outside Carlisle. But no matter where Sents has visited, she's found common themes among farm families.

"Farmers care about their families, they care about their land," she said. "Farmers are in it for the long haul. They have the next generation in mind."

Sents did not grow up on a farm. Instead, it was a neighbor in her Iowa community—who raised sheep and grains—who introduced Sents to agriculture. That led to involvement in 4-H and FFA, and later studying agriculture at Iowa State. While at Iowa State, Sents saw a presentation from Beck's Hybrids and several of their "Why I Farm" videos.

"I watched those videos with goosebumps and a lump in my throat," she said. "I wanted to learn how to tell stories like that."

Sents started a blog of her own, honed her journalism skills, and landed an internship with Beck's. While in her senior year, Sents approached Beck's about her dream of visiting all 50 states and combining it with the "Why I Farm" movement. Blogs like, "Why I Farm" and social media are a crucial way for farmers to tell their story, Sents said. She also hopes her journey will spread agriculture's message beyond farm families.

Sents does some advanced scouting before going into a new state, but there's been moments of serendipity. Some of the best recommendations she gets on farms to visit is from fellow farmers. She's also been welcomed at many dinner tables and guest rooms throughout her journey—a blessing given the shoe-string budget she travels on.

"I want to make sure I thank all of the farmers for their hospitality. It feels like I'm leaving home every time I pull away from a farm," she said.

Follow Sents' journey at www.whyifarm.com/blog

Golf Outing Raises Money for Foundation

The Pennsylvania Friends of Agriculture Foundation will continue to spread the message of agriculture thanks to the support of golfers and donors. Pennsylvania Farm Bureau, which provides support to the foundation, hosted an annual golf tournament in Hershey to raise money for the foundation. The 24th Annual Richard Prether Pennsylvania Friends of Agriculture Golf Classic raised \$45,000 to support the foundation's activities.

Since 1993, the event has generated more than \$779,000 in contributions to the foundation. The foundation funds a number of projects, including the popular Mobile Ag Ed Science Lab program, and the annual Educator's Ag Institute. The Ag Lab program operates as a classroom on wheels, delivering agriculture-themed lessons to children in kindergarten through eighth grade. In addition, the foundation recently started the "Ag on the Go" program, which takes lessons taught in the labs to schools that cannot host an Ag Lab.

"Pennsylvania farmers want children across the state to have the opportunity to learn about farming, the environment and where their food comes from. Money raised from the golf tournament helps the foundation achieve those goals," said PFB President Rick Ebert, who also chairs the foundation. "The foundation also helps train teachers about agriculture practices and encourages them to include accurate information about food and farming in their classroom curriculum."

This year, 128 golfers participated in the event. Dozens of sponsors, including platinum sponsors Nationwide Insurance and Firestone Farm Tires, helped the foundation build on its continued success.

"Our six mobile agriculture education science labs are universally popular, but they require a tremendous amount of financial support to keep them on the road and properly supplied. Fundraising events such as the golf classic help us bring these labs to schools across the Commonwealth and fund additional education out-reach programs spearheaded by our foundation," Ebert said.

Industrial Hemp Bill Approved

The Pennsylvania General Assembly adopted a bill that would allow for a pilot program for the growing of industrial hemp. House Bill 967, introduced by Rep. Russ Diamond, provides limited growing and marketing of hemp, under the supervision of the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture. The bill is similar to Senate legislation introduced by Sen. Judy Schwank. A provision in the 2014 Farm Bill allowed for states to establish limited pilot programs supervised by state governments and a research university. Gov. Tom Wolf has signed the legislation.