

## Progressive planning offers smaller steps to MAEAP verification



For livestock farmers, the pinnacle of accomplishment is MAEAP Livestock System verification. Many farmers elect to immediately pursue verification, but for others the all-inclusive nature of a Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan (CNMP) can seem challenging. These farmers often find taking smaller steps toward environmental stewardship to be more practical and economical. The MAEAP's Progressive Planning approach has helped many small and medium livestock farmers work toward verification.

Progressive Planning targets livestock farmers who are not yet ready or able to implement a CNMP. The program employs one-on-one, confidential guidance and assistance from non-regulatory MAEAP partners, such as Michigan Milk Producers Association (MMPA), Michigan State University Extension, Conservation Districts, and MAEAP technicians.

Some organizations, like MMPA, have invested in MAEAP training for their field staff and encourage them to work with members toward environmental compliance. As a result of these organizations' promotion of Progressive Planning, more than 1,000 conservation practices were implemented in 2005.

### Who's Involved?

A record 550 small- and medium-sized farms participated in MAEAP Progressive Planning in 2005. Dairy farms represented the largest participation with 485 farms, (88 percent of the total). Swine followed with 16 farms (3 percent of the total), beef with 11 farms

(2 percent of the total) and 38 mixed-species farms (7 percent of the total).

### Environmental Benefits

Even when a farmer does not officially complete a CNMP or MAEAP verification, the support of Progressive Planning partners has assisted in on-farm practice changes protecting the environment.

Almost 20 percent of the small- and medium-sized farms eliminated a direct discharge. In total, 130 direct discharges were eliminated on 101 farms.

More than 10 percent of participating farms eliminated at least one area that was at a high risk of having a discharge. A total of 186 high-discharge risks were eliminated.

More than 1,000 conservation practices were implemented, including site-specific field evaluations, mapping sensitive areas, planting cover crops, changing tillage practices, installing buffers and evaluating fields for the appropriateness of winter manure application.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

With support from:



Michigan Food & Farming Systems-MIFFS  
Bringing Farmers & Communities Together



July 2007



Cropping



Farmstead



Livestock

## Upcoming Events



Visit the MAEAP display  
at lot 754 at Ag Expo,  
July 17-19

For a list of Phase 1  
credited events, please  
see the MAEAP Web site.

Additional meeting information  
is available at [www.maeap.org](http://www.maeap.org)



## Duane Tirrell mourned by farming community

Duane Tirrell was a leader in the farming community, but it was his personal influence and steadfast character that left farmers all over the state mourning his death and celebrating his life.

Tirrell, 53, was killed in a traffic accident April 30 when a semi-trailer collided with his tractor near Charlotte.

As tragic as his death was, his life inspired farmers and non-farmers alike.



TIRRELL

"Duane was a great leader who always had the big picture in mind," said Ernie Birchmeier, livestock specialist with Michigan Farm Bureau. "He always made the effort to understand all sides of an issue, and he was always willing to be there when he was needed."

Evidence of that servant's attitude is clear when looking at Tirrell's record of service to farming. He served in nearly every position on

the Eaton County Farm Bureau, including president, vice president, chairman of a number of committees, and media spokesman. He also served on several state Farm Bureau committees and advisory groups, and was involved with the 4-H, Michigan Sheep Breeders' Association and the Michigan Forage Council.

Duane represented the Michigan Sheep Breeders' Association as a part of the Michigan Livestock Industry Initiative

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

# New well in your plans? Read this first



By Josh Appleby

The installation of wells on farms is necessary and provides for a productive use of our groundwater resources. However, careful planning and attention to detail are essential for aquifer protection and your bottom line.

Many homeowners and producers are unaware of Michigan's well isolation distance criteria. This, coupled with varying interpretations of the well code, can make proper well placement complicated. I have personally seen wells installed within the last year as livestock or irrigation wells without proper permits or isolation distances. Although local health departments and well drillers may have the best intentions, it is ultimately the well owner's responsibility to obtain the proper permit and meet isolation distances.

The prospects of not meeting well isolation distance criteria can be frustrating and costly. You may be required to move the well. You can be denied Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) cost-share because of an improperly placed well or structure impacting the cost-shared item. MAEAP verification in the Farmstead System is not available. The contamination of an aquifer could ultimately lead to health problems for consumptive users and exceptionally expensive remediation.

The good part of this story is you can get free help making sure the site is appropriate, and it doesn't cost more to do it right the first time.

## Myths debunked

**Myth** - Farms do not have public wells.

**Fact** - Farms with non-family employees who have reasonable access to well water must classify the well as public. In addition, wells that service milk parlors on grade A dairies are public wells.

**Myth** - Private wells do not need a permit.

**Fact** - There is no such thing as a well that does not require a permit. All wells are classified as either public or private, including irrigation and livestock wells.

**Myth** - The rules contain no common sense and I will never be able to meet the requirements.

**Fact** - The local health department has authority to provide deviations to the minimum isolation distances dependant on site specific conditions. In addition, we have site specific statewide deviation criteria for public wells.

## What types of things need particular attention?

- Petroleum storage and handling
- Manure and wastewater storage
- Pesticide storage and handling
- Fertilizer storage and handling
- Pesticide and fertilizer application areas
- Animal yards
- Septic systems

## What should you do?

Work closely with your local Groundwater Stewardship Technician, well driller and health department. If you receive an isolation distance deviation from the health department, get it in writing. Local health departments are the delegated authority for the siting of wells, and their written deviation is an important document. Think ahead when planning a new well and anticipate future expansions

or additions. When making expansions or additions, make sure they meet the isolation distance criteria for existing wells. Links to your local Groundwater Stewardship Technician can be found at [www.maeap.org](http://www.maeap.org).

## Progressive planning

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The Progressive Planning approach offers seven options reflecting components of a CNMP and gives farmers the opportunity to work through these options at their own pace:

- 1) Confidential site review and completed action plan;
- 2) Whole-farm nutrient balance;
- 3) Manure spreading plan;
- 4) Conservation practices on fields used for manure application;
- 5) Emergency and employee training plans;
- 6) Mortality and veterinary medical waste disposal;
- 7) Odor management plan.

As progress is made, additional goals and timeframes are established.

### Progressive Planning option

Almost 700 changes were made to achieve nutrient sustainability, including adding additional acres, reducing animal numbers, changing crop rotations and reducing phosphorus in the feed rations.

- Almost 50 percent of the farms in progressive planning adopted or modified their soil testing regimen.
- About one third of involved farms (30 percent) reduced commercial fertilizer applications.
- 30 percent developed recordkeeping systems.
- Almost 30 percent calibrated manure equipment.
- Almost 50 percent modified their mortality management practices to include timely disposal.
- 40 percent developed a plan to enhance relations with neighbors related to manure application and odor management.

## Promote your farm with MAEAP bookmarks

One of the many ways you can spread the word about your green farm is by using the MAEAP promotional bookmark.

Two styles of colorful bookmarks are available for MAEAP-verified farms— one targeting your neighbors and another meant for retail customers. Each handout describes the basic steps you've taken to minimize pollution risks, and lists the benefits to both the farm operation and the surrounding community. Whether handed out face-to-face with a quick explanation or put inside farm market bags and baskets, these are an effective, easy means of helping to educate your community about the effort you put into being a good steward of the land.

Quantities of up to 200 bookmarks are available at no cost. For orders of more than 200 pieces, the producer will be expected to pay production costs (currently about \$7.50 per 100 bookmarks). For more information, contact Carrie Vollmer-Sanders at 1-800-292-2680, ext. 2026.

## Verification in good standing

At recent meetings, several farmers and MAEAP partners have asked what happens to MAEAP verification when a farm has a verified Right to Farm (RTF) complaint or a DEQ verified discharge or other enforcement issue.

### Requirements for MAEAP Verification “In Good Standing”

When farms meet performance standards specific to the MAEAP System verification (shown by a review of the appropriate risk assessment, a farmer interview and a thorough farm inspection), farm owners are notified by the Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA) that “verification in good standing is contingent on an annual CNMP review (for the Livestock System) and updates as necessary as conditions change on your farm as well as following the practices you have outlined (all three MAEAP Systems).” In addition to meeting the technical criteria, the practices outlined include conformance to the Generally Accepted Agricultural and Management Practices (GAAMPs) applicable to the MAEAP System (including the Site Selection & Odor Control GAAMPs for New & Expanding Livestock Operations).

### Loss of Good Standing

When a producer with a verified farm, through situation or choice, follows a strategy that is not consistent with practices in place at the time of verification, resulting in a verified Right to Farm complaint, verified discharge or DEQ enforcement action, the MAEAP verified farm immediately loses its “good standing” until such time as approved practices are in place and verified. The objective is always to work with the farmer to modify practices to be in conformance with the required standards.

### Right to Farm Violations

Following a verified Right to Farm complaint, the MDA MAEAP program manager notifies the farmer (through written correspondence) that verification is in jeopardy. Verification in good standing is contingent on following those practices reviewed at the time of the farm verification visit, including following the components of the CNMP (Livestock System), risk assessments for the Farmstead & Cropping Systems and conformance with the appropriate GAAMPs. Lack of conformance and unwillingness to make corrective actions results in loss of verification.

### Discharges & DEQ Enforcement

Following a verified environmental complaint of a discharge or

DEQ enforcement action, the MDA MAEAP program manager notifies the farmer that MAEAP verification is in jeopardy. Verification in good standing is contingent on first satisfying all requirements related to the DEQ enforcement action as determined by DEQ. In cases that also involve a Right to Farm complaint, conformance to the applicable GAAMPs must also be demonstrated through a farm inspection and conformance to any other contingencies detailed in the Right to Farm letter. Lack of compliance and unwillingness to make corrective actions results in loss of Verification.

### Return to Good Standing

Following the completion of any DEQ enforcement requirements and any outstanding Right to Farm issues, and at the request of the farmer, MAEAP staff will schedule a farm inspection to verify conformance with all MAEAP requirements specific to the System and a return to good standing. Written notification will follow that farm inspection.

## Duane Tirrell

### CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

that led to the development of the Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP). He was a regular participant in the MAEAP Livestock System Committee meeting and associated MAEAP events.

But beyond his involvement and leadership, Tirrell was known as a man of character, compassion and humility.

“I cannot express enough what a genuinely kind-hearted and great person he was,” said Bobbie Garnant, Eaton County Farm Bureau president. “That just magnifies the loss we all feel. He was a significant person in the community, and his family is as nice a family as you will ever meet. To know someone who has contact with everyone, and yet not one person could say a bad word about him, well, that’s overwhelming. You can feel it when you go into Charlotte. The whole community misses him.”

“Duane had a passion for doing the right thing,” he said. “Many people have a passion for their own thing, but he had it for the right thing, and his death will leave a void in the agriculture community.”

Memorial contributions can be made to the Michigan Sheep Breeders Association or the Eaton County Junior Livestock Association.

## Why get verified?

Wondering why you should step forward and become MAEAP verified? Or why you should continue with your verification when it’s time to be re-verified? Below are comments given by a group of MAEAP-verified farmers who were invited to answer the question: Why would a farmer want their farm to be MAEAP verified?

- Demonstrate leadership and the ability for agriculture to meet comprehensive requirements through a voluntary program. In other words, step up and walk the talk.
- Participate in other programs linked to MAEAP – farm bill cost share and incentives – CSP and groundwater program incentives. Insurance premium reductions.
- Establish a high level of conformance with environmental standards – to proudly demonstrate this accomplishment to neighbors, legislators, local elected officials.
- Have an avenue for continuing environmental education and information through MAEAP events and newsletters.

- Increase compliance with environmental laws and assure conformance with applicable GAAMPs.
- Expand the network for technical support.
- Be “environmentally true” to yourself, your business, and your community.
- Enjoy peace of mind and know you’re doing the “right thing.”
- Save fertilizer dollars.
- Understand the whole operation and risks associated with the environment and farming.
- Identify environmental challenges on the farm.
- Helps neighbor relations and creates a good public image.
- Makes my loan officer happy.
- Know there are problems and want to be proactive.
- Want my family to farm this land. And their children after them.

Call 517-373-9797 to arrange for a verification visit or to find out where to start the process.

# MABA: Think about recycling pesticide containers



## Best practices program protects land, water for agriculture

Now is a good time to start thinking about recycling clean, empty pesticide containers, and the Michigan Agri-Business Association recently reminded members of the agriculture community to recycle their containers at convenient sites across the state. The nearly four dozen grind-and-collection sites are part of the Michigan Groundwater Stewardship Program.

“This outstanding program helps us get rid of pesticide containers in a safe, convenient and environmentally responsible way,” MABA President Jim Byrum said. “Michigan’s agriculture community is on the leading edge of best practices when it comes to correctly disposing of and recycling pesticide containers and this program is proof of our commitment. It’s the key to protecting our valuable water resources and our land, which will help all of us in agriculture succeed today and well into the future.”

Tri-Rinse will do the grinding and grind sites are tentatively scheduled from Sept. 5 through Sept. 14. To recycle pesticide containers under the program:

- Containers must be 2.5 gallons or smaller.
- Containers must be triple rinsed.
- Containers cannot have any residual pesticide, although stains are acceptable.

- Caps, foil and other labels or instructions must be removed. Before taking containers to a collection site, recyclers should call ahead for drop off times and dates, Byrum said. Large bags will be available to store used containers safely. To order bags, call Scott Zeeb at the Michigan Department of Agriculture at (517) 241-3693.

In 2006, more than 52,300 pounds of plastic pesticide containers were ground and recycled, an increase from 2005 when nearly 52,000 pounds were ground and recycled.

“It’s definitely been a popular program that has benefited agriculture and pesticide product stewardship,” Byrum said. “We hope to continue our upward trend. Our goal is to ensure that this outstanding recycling program is convenient for everyone and is widely utilized.”

MABA also urges people to call the Michigan Department of Agriculture to report fertilizer and pesticide spills, toll-free at (800) 405-0101. The MDA – and not a federal or other state department – is the best agency to deal with such incidents.

**If you would like to receive this newsletter via e-mail only, please call Peggy Snyder at (517) 335-4497**

## Inside

**1** Progressive planning offers smaller steps to MAEAP verification

Duane Tirrell mourned by farming community

**2** New well in your plans? Read this first.

Promote your farm with MAEAP bookmarks

**3** Verification in good standing

Why get verified?

**4** MABA: Think about recycling pesticide containers



Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance  
P.O. Box 30017, Lansing, MI 48909

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

PRESORTED  
STANDARD  
US POSTAGE  
PAID  
LANSING, MI  
PERMIT #37