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# Journal of Soil & Water Conservation

To advance the science and art of good land and water use worldwide

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**Cover:** This pristine aspen stand in the Grand Mesa National Forest in Colorado leads one to reflect on the challenges facing multiple use of national forest land. See page 626. Forest Service photo by R. E. Grossman.

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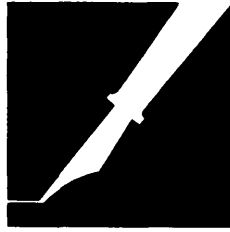
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## PEN POINTS

### Real farmland protection?

While there are several good observations in Darrell Napton's article on farmland protection in the Greater Twin Cities [*JSWC*, July-August, 1990, pp. 446-449], I question the author's claim that "it provides a comprehensive approach to farmland protection that might be used as a model for other states that are developing or improving similar programs."

---

*"Pen Points" is a forum for comment on published material or land and water management issues in general. Readers are invited to express their views in a letter to the editor. Long letters may be shortened.—Editor.*

The linking of comprehensive plans and capital improvements with agricultural zoning, farm property tax breaks, and right-to-farm protection makes good sense, and this has been done successfully in Oregon. But unlike Oregon, the Metropolitan Agricultural Preserves (MAP) approach is voluntary: "individuals choose whether to participate... the resulting enrollment pattern is one of spot-zoning, with many, if not most, participants bordering at least one nonparticipant" (p. 449). Such spot-zoning can easily lead to confused and incompatible development patterns and will not promote the retention of farmland in the long run.

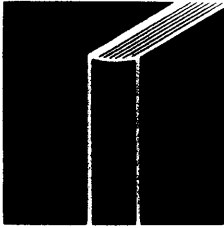
The eight-year MAP contracts provide farmers with rather little property tax break—"from less than \$1.00 per acre to more than \$8.00 per acre, with an average savings of slightly more than \$3.00 per acre" (p. 447). This is hardly enough to convince a farmer to stay in farming, but it may help the farmer hold on for a few more years while the value of his land increases for eventual sale for a non-farm use.

Although the 178,000 acres of land enrolled in MAP is encouraging, I am wary of the author's lack of farmland conversion figures in the seven-county Twin Cities area from 1980 to 1989, or at least a comparison of farmland acreage in the 1982 and 1987 Agricultural Censuses.

Ultimately, the author admits that the MAP approach is really geared to the orderly conversion of farmland to non-farm uses: "MAP might best be viewed as a program to enable farmland owners to adjust the timing of their eventual land sale to their personal situations, while giving communities an opportunity to plan the timing and location of growth" (p. 449).

This is not farmland protection. Rather, it is the use of agricultural zoning as a holding zone for eventual development. Unless agricultural zoning is made mandatory and enforced, it will not retain land in farm use in the long run.

Thomas L. Daniels  
Agricultural Preserve Board  
Lancaster, Pennsylvania



## BOOKS, ETC.

### General

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- Rivers and Trails Conservation.* 20 pp., illus., 1990. U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402.
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### Air

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### Forests

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