

The AMI Task Force on Environmental Matters is once again becoming active. 13 members attended a meeting called by Committee Chairman Ken Lomax to air a number of important and controversial matters.

The issue which was on everyone's lips dealt with efforts by Pennsylvania's Department of Environmental Resources to re-define spent mushroom compost as "residual waste."

This definition would put spent compost in a "hazardous" category along with municipal and industrial wastes. Significant permit fees and paper work would be required for residual waste classification.

Among the actions which were taken by the Task Force was the adoption by AMI of proposed language which would more accurately define spent compost as agricultural. Detailed supporting documents were prepared by several Task Force members.

In addition, the committee voted to work more closely with the Pennsylvania Farmer's Association in sustaining their help in preventing the proposed DER changes, and also incorporating the more reasonable language which AMI is proposing.

Finally, the Task Force, along with AMI members statewide will canvass mushroom legislators to assure that this matter is handled above board and in an effort to assure that the mushroom industry's view of this situation is properly considered.

The committee also considered efforts being made by at least two Soil Conservation Districts to develop proper water quality management plans by mushroom farmers. While the plans themselves are being developed by each individual mushroom farmer to comply with state and county regulations, the Chester County Soil Conservation District is currently conducting demonstrations to help farmers to know how to develop such a plan.

There are several of these demonstrations in progress, and AMI Chairman Jamie Ciarrocchi invited task force members and other growers to visit Modern Mushroom

Farms in Toughkenamon to share in what they have accomplished through their demonstration project.

It was recognized that all of agriculture must have these plans in place in the relatively near future and that many farmers have already implemented conservation plans of their own. The mushroom industry is no exception, as Task Force Member Donald "Buster" Needham pointed out, and all growers are being encouraged to get started on developing their plans.

A letter will soon be going out to all growers to reinforce the fact that every grower must have a plan and that they should contact their local Soil Conservation Office for more information.

In a related development, the committee was informed that Elbert Wells was re-assigned from his temporary position with the Department of Environmental Resources. His efforts to update and change the Mushroom Best Practices Manual seem to be left hanging without continued editing and review.

The current Norristown office Administrator told onlookers at a meeting on water quality progress in the Red Clay Creek watershed last Summer that he would be responsible for revising the manual.

Because of budget cuts and personnel changes he didn't anticipate any movement on this issue very soon.

PESTICIDES

Finally, while Dennis Wheeler, chairman of the Pesticide Sub-Committee of the Task Force, was unable to attend the meeting, Substitute Roger Claypoole reported that Dennis had attended meetings relative to minor use pesticides along with AMI Acting Director Laura Phelps.

Claypoole said that, "it would only cost AMI about \$2 million to maintain a label for Malathion," so he recommended that AMI become more active in the IR-4 process.

There was also some discussion regarding Bravo, as Paul Wuest reported that the industry had been extended a "Section 18 Label" for one more year. He couldn't comment on the progress of obtaining a permanent label for the product. **MN**

Spent compost... what is it?

DER Takes Swipe at Question, AMI Pushes For Accurate Answers

