Profit Management

Sodbuster, swampbuster, and conservation compliance

These are three terms that many of you will become more familiar with in coming months and years. Of the 400 million acres of cropland, 118 million acres are classed as highly erodible. An additional 226 million acres of similar land not currently in cropland could potentially be converted to cropland. This land may be subject to both sodbuster and conservation compliance. Also, 5 million acres of wetlands have potential for conversion into farmland that would be subject to swampbuster rules.

Sodbuster regulations can give you trouble in 1987 if you plant highly erodible land that had not been cropped since 1981 to agricultural commodities after December 23, 1985. Under sodbuster rules, if you crop this land without a developed, applied conservation plan, you will be ineligible for all covered programs for any crop you produce on land you own or operate. A fine point that might get you in trouble: crops such as alfalfa are not considered to be farm commodities. If you have had this land in alfalfa since 1981, plow it, and plant corn in 1987, you will be in trouble. For those of you who brought highly erodible land that was not cropped between 1981 and 1985 into production after December 23, 1985, but planted a crop before June 27, 1986, these regulations do not apply until the 1987 crop.

Swampbuster regulations prohibit a person from bringing wetlands into production of agricultural commodities after December 23, 1985, if the land had not been cropped between 1981 and 1985. You lose program benefits unless you convert the land back to wetlands. Wetland is any land that contains a predominance of hydric soils and supports a prevalence of hydrophytic vegetation under normal circumstances. This could involve land you might not think of as wetlands, such as some tight clay soils in southern Illinois.

Conservation compliance involves highly erodible land in production of annual crops (agricultural commodities) before December 23, 1985. Under this provision you must have a conservation plan developed by January 1, 1990, or within two years of soil mapping. The conservation plan must be applied before January 1, 1995. If this land is bid into the Conservation Reserve Program, a conservation plan must be developed by contract termination. The plan must be applied before this land can be put back into crop production.

Highly erodible land is defined as a soil which has potential to erode at eight times its tolerable erosion rate. For the technically minded, this number is arrived at through the use of the universal soil loss and wind erosion equations. By early September, maps should be available in most ASCS and SCS offices to assist you in determining whether you have any fields that fit the regulations. In addition, if you are a Farmer's Home borrower, the entire farm will be evaluated. That way, you'll know.

The Soil Conservation Office is the first place to visit. The people there are the only ones who can tell you whether the land fits this category. They are also the people to work with on a conservation plan, though in some states soil conservation districts will be involved. With something like 118 million acres affected, 1990 is not as far away as it seems. It will take time to get these plans completed. 1983

Penalties. Failure to meet the requirements under sodbuster and conservation compliance can result in denial of farm program participation, federal crop insurance benefits, FmHA loans, and storage payments. That applies to all the land you operate, not just the fragile land. Under swampbuster regulations, you lose the right to participate in government programs.

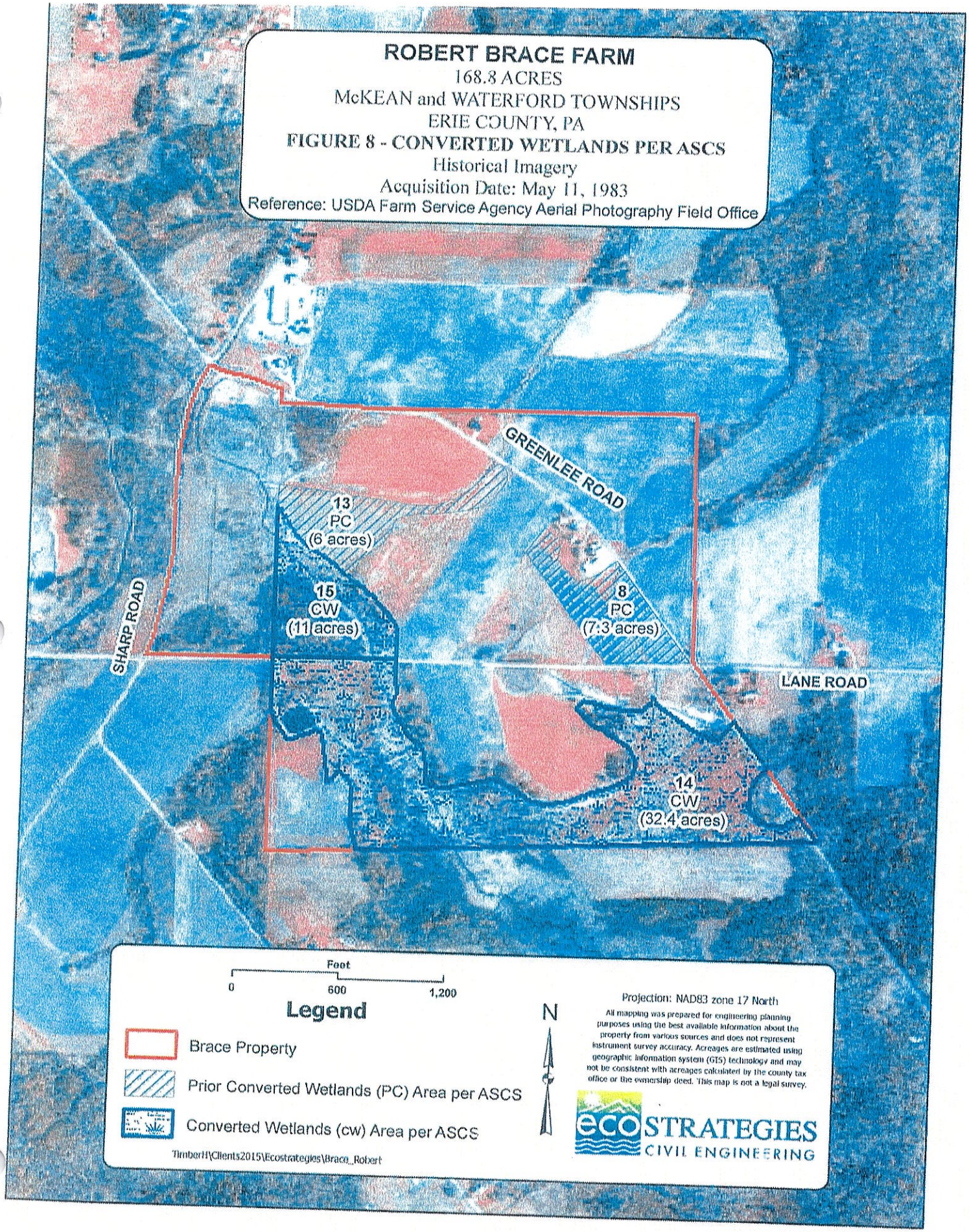
This is going to be somewhat of a bureaucratic maze for some of you. The ASCS, SCS, FCIC, and FmHA are involved. Start early if you think you have land that fits this category.

extend 1987

Selecting corn hyrbrids for a high-fertility program

This season's excellent corn yield prospects may disguise the ability of some hybrids to yield considerably better than others under high fertility conditions. Yet research conducted by a Purdue agronomist for the last several years has shown that some hybrids effectively use and respond to higher nitrogen rates when the soil contains sufficient amounts of phosphorus and potash. These hybrids are referred to as high-fertility hybrids.

Low-fertility hybrids take up most of their


ROBERT BRACE FARM
168.8 ACRES
McKEAN and WATERFORD TOWNSHIPS
ERIE COUNTY, PA
FIGURE 8 - CONVERTED WETLANDS PER ASCS
Historical Imagery
Acquisition Date: May 11, 1983
Reference: USDA Farm Service Agency Aerial Photography Field Office
GREENLEE ROAD
SHARP ROAD
LANE ROAD
13
PC
(6 acres)
15
CW
(11 acres)
8
PC
(7.3 acres)
14
CW
(32.4 acres)
Feet
0
600
1,200
Legend
Brace Property
Prior Converted Wetlands (PC) Area per ASCS
Converted Wetlands (cw) Area per ASCS
N
Projection: NAD83 zone 17 North
All mapping was prepared for engineering planning purposes using the best available information about the property from various sources and does not represent instrument survey accuracy. Acreages are estimated using geographic information system (GIS) technology and may not be consistent with acreages calculated by the county tax office or the ownership deed. This map is not a legal survey.
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