

1937, ch. 437, sec. 16.

46. (Legislative Determinations, and Declaration of Policy.) It is hereby declared, as a matter of legislative determination.

A. (The Condition.) That the farm and grazing lands of the State of Maryland are among the basic assets of the State and that the preservation of these lands is necessary to protect and promote the health, safety, and general welfare of its people; that improper land-use practices have caused and have contributed to, and are now causing and contributing to, a progressively more serious erosion of the farm and grazing lands of this State by wind and water; that the breaking of natural grass, plant, and forest cover have interfered with the natural factors of soil stabilization, causing loosening of soil and exhaustion of humus, and developing a soil condition that favors erosion; that the topsoil is being blown and washed out of fields and pastures; that there has been an accelerated washing of sloping fields; that these processes of erosion by wind and water speed up with removal of absorptive topsoil, causing exposure of less absorptive and less protective but more erosive sub-soil; that failure by any land occupier to conserve the soil and control erosion upon his lands causes a washing and blowing of soil and water from his lands onto other lands and makes the conservation of soil and control of erosion on such other lands difficult or impossible.

B. (The Consequences.) That the consequences of such soil erosion in the form of soil-blowing and soil-washing are the silting and sedimentation of stream channels, reservoirs, dams, ditches, and harbors; the loss of fertile soil material in dust storms; the piling up of soil on lower slopes, and its deposit over alluvial plains; the reduction in productivity or outright ruin of rich bottom lands by overwash of poor sub-soil material, sand, and gravel swept out of the hills; deterioration of soil and its fertility, deterioration of crops grown thereon, and declining acre yields despite development of scientific processes for increasing such yields; loss of soil and water which causes destruction of food and cover for wildlife; a blowing and washing of soil into streams which silts over spawning beds, and destroys water plants, diminishing the food supply of fish; a diminishing of the underground water reserve, which causes water shortages, intensifies periods of drought, and causes crop failures; an increase in the speed and volume of rainfall run-off, causing severe and increasing floods, which bring suffering, disease, and death; impoverishment of families attempting to farm eroding and eroded lands; damage to roads, highways, railways, farm buildings, and other property from floods and from dust storms; and losses in navigation, hydro-electric power, municipal water supply, irrigation developments, farming, and grazing.

C. (The Appropriate Corrective Method.) That to conserve soil resources and control and prevent soil erosion, it is necessary that land-use practices contributing to soil wastage and soil erosion be discouraged and discontinued, and appropriate soil-conserving land-use practices be adopted and carried out; that among the procedures necessary for widespread adoption, are the carrying on of engineering operations such as the construction of terraces, terrace outlets, check-dams, dikes, ponds, ditches, and the like; the utilization of strip cropping, lister furrowing, contour cultivating, and contour furrowing; land irrigation; seeding and planting of waste, sloping, abandoned, or eroded lands to water-conserving and erosion-preventing plants, trees, and grasses; forestation and reforestation; rotation of crops; soil stabilization with trees, grasses, legumes, and