State Farmlands Are Disappearing

BATON ROUGE, La. (AP) — Development also tends to push up land prices, and East Baton Rouge Parish county agent George Simoneaux says that means trouble for a young man who wants to go into farming.

"He will never be able to buy the land and own it himself because the price is staggering," Simoneaux said.

Another effect of development is erosion, according to Loupe.

"The best erosion control is grass, but when you open a new subdivision you take the grass off," Simoneaux said.

"This is when you have erosion problems. A lot (of the soil) finds its way into our streams."

Charley Staples, the head of the state Soil and Water Conservation Committee, said there is no immediate remedy for the disappearance of farmland.

Staples said the Legislature has been cold even to the hint of land use policy, even to the point of balking at legislation to control water runoff — and pesticide pollution — from fields.

"The Legislature read that as land use planning and they wouldn't even look at that," Staples said.

Tax incentives and restrictive zoning are two methods tried by other states.

Simoneaux said public regulation to block development may come in the future, but who will do it and how it will happen are anyone's guess.

Meanwhile, the development continues unabated.

"You know it's happening and I know it's happening, but how do you stop it?" Simoneaux asked. "When will land be designated as farm land? When will somebody say that? Who will be strong enough to make that decision?"