

LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY FOR:**August 9, 1999**

NRCS, Office of Legislative Affairs
 Room 5121 South Agriculture Bldg.
 (202) 720-2771

For additional information contact:

Tia G. Young
 Douglas J. McKalip
 Anita Holland-Spears

=====

LAST WEEK -

SENATE PASSES FISCAL 2000 SPENDING BILL - The Senate voted 89-8 Wednesday for a \$7.4 billion emergency aid package to farmers suffering from depressed commodity prices and drought conditions. The Senate added the aid package to the FY 2000 Agriculture Appropriations bill (S.1233, H.R. 1906) which passed by voice vote Wednesday night and totals \$68.1 billion. (The Senate passed H.R. 1906 with the text of their own legislation, S. 1233 inserted in place of the House language. This procedural tool is used as a way to initiate a Conference between the two chambers, which must work out the differences between the two versions of the appropriations bill.)

Senator Thad Cochran (R-MS) stated that a balanced program had been created, one that was fair to all farmers, not just give them a promise of loans or technical assistance. Lawmakers also disagreed about how the funds would be disbursed. Republicans maintained that emergency aid would go to farmers through the Agriculture Market Transition Act (AMTA) program, while Democrats desperately wanted to send the money through the Loan Deficiency Payment (LDP) program. This battle will likely continue in conference.

SENATE CONFEREES TO THE AGRICULTURE APPROPRIATIONS NAMED

Conferees will meet on legislation making fiscal 2000 appropriations for programs of the Agriculture Department. The time, date and room number will be announced at a later date. The House conferees have not been named. The Senate members are as follows:

Thad Cochran (R-MS)
 Arlen Specter (R-PA)
 Christopher Bond (R-MO)
 Slade Gorton (R-WA)
 Mitch McConnell (R-KY)
 Conrad Burns (R-MT)
 Ted Stevens (R-AK)

Herbert Kohl (D-WI)
 Tom Harkin (D-IA)
 Byron Dorgan (D-ND)
 Dianne Feinstein (D-CA)
 Richard Durbin (D-IL)
 Robert Byrd (D-WV)

LEGISLATION OF NOTE

The following Bills of significance to NRCS and conservation have been introduced.

BILL	MEMBER	PURPOSE
H.R. 2328	Sweeny, (NY)	Would amend the Federal Water Pollution Control Act to reauthorize the Clean Lakes Program
H.R. 2669	Saxton, (NJ)	Would reauthorize the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972 for the preservation, restoration, enhancement or creation of coastal habitats
S. 1426	Harkin, (IA)	Would amend the Food Security Act of 1985 to create conservation security payments
S. 1448	Hutchinson, (AR)	Would amend the Food Security Act 1985 to authorize the annual enrollment of land in the wetlands reserve program at 250,000 acres, to extend the program through 2005
H.R. 2793	Stenholm, (TX)	Would designate the Department of Agriculture as the lead Federal agency for national agricultural policy regarding conservation and the environment, including water quality research and modeling, water quality assessments and monitoring, and technical assistance for all agricultural activities conducted on agricultural lands. The bill would also reauthorize the 208j program of the Clean Water Act

LOOKING AHEAD

FISCAL 2000 AGRICULTURE APPROPRIATIONS - Conferees will meet on legislation making fiscal 2000 appropriations for programs of the Agriculture Department. The time, room number and date will be announced later.

AUGUST RECESS

After completing legislative business, Congress adjourned for the summer recess August 7 - September 7.

