

**WEEKLY LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY FOR:**

**July 3, 2000**

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**LAST WEEK:**

**APPROPRIATIONS** – The House took floor action on H.R. 4461 on Thursday June 29<sup>th</sup>. During the floor activity two amendments of importance to NRCS were introduced and agreed upon. The first was an amendment offered by Rep. Marion Berry (D-AR) to zero out the account for salaries and expenses for the Office of the Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment (\$693,000), and to transfer that amount to the account for Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D). Rep. Susan Kelly (R-NY) offered an amendment to strike the provision in the bill that prohibits conservation funding from being used for the American Heritage Rivers Initiative.

The House adjourned on June 30<sup>th</sup> at 2:06 a.m., but did not complete work on the Agriculture Appropriations bill. The House will reconvene on July 10<sup>th</sup>.

No action has been taken on S. 2536.

**FY 2001 SUPPLEMENTAL** - The House agreed to the Conference Report on the Military Construction spending bill, H.R. 4425, on June 29<sup>th</sup>. This bill contains some provisions for emergency supplemental budgets including funds for projects pertaining to the Los Alamos fires. The NRCS provision is \$4 million for the Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program. At press time, the Senate is also expected to take action before adjournment.

Additional emergency funds are expected to be included later in the regular FY 2001 appropriations process.

**TMDL HEARING** - On Wednesday June 28<sup>th</sup> the House Agriculture Committee (Chairman Combest, R-TX) held a hearing on H.R. 4502, a bill to delay EPA's TMDL process until completion of a National Academy of Science study. USDA Undersecretary for Natural Resources and Environment, Jim Lyons and EPA Assistant Administrator, Chuck Fox were challenged by many members for their actions and proposed rules. Ranking member, Rep. Charlie Stenholm (D-TX), stressed his belief that USDA has not fulfilled the responsibility of representing agriculture interest in regards to EPA regulations. Mr. Lyons stated the importance of funding the voluntary incentive programs such as CRP, WHIP, WRP, FPP, and EQIP as an important part of improving the nation's water quality.

**CALFED PROGRAM** – The House Water and Power Subcommittee (Chairman Doolittle, R-Calif.) of the Resources Committee held an oversight hearing on the CALFED program on June 29<sup>th</sup>. The hearing provided an arena to discuss California water rights, particularly the California Bay Delta Environmental Enhancement Act (CBDEEA). Deputy Secretary of Interior, David Hayes and Secretary for Resources in California, Mary Nichols submitted testimony asking for a \$60 million extension of CBDEE Act. Speaking against this act was Kay Bryan, the District 5 Supervisor for Siskiyou County, CA. While many members were present, those who played major roles in the hearing were Richard Pombo (R-CA), Chairman Doolittle, Calvin Dooley (D-CA), George Radanovich (R-CA), and Wally Herger (R-CA).

Kay Bryan argued that CBDEE would overrule California State Law, thereby taking away state rights. While the extension seemed probable, the Subcommittee was concerned with elements of the act that would affect the availability of constituents' groundwater that is used for watering crops and livestock.

**LEGISLATION OF NOTE** – The NRCS Legislative Affairs staff identifies and tracks legislation of particular interest to NRCS and conservation. This information is available on the NRCS Legislative Affairs web-site under the heading LEGISLATION OF NOTE. The address for the Legislative Affairs web-site is as follows:

<http://www.nhq.nrcs.usda.gov/LA/LAhome.html>

**NEW LEGISLATION -**

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

<b>BILL</b>	<b>MEMBER</b>	<b>PURPOSE</b>
S. 2763	Baucus (MT)	Would change vegetative cover requirements on highly erodible cropland subject to conservation reserve contracts.
H.R. 4733	Young (FL)	Appropriations for the Corps of Engineers pertaining to rivers and harbors, flood control, beach erosion, and related purposes.
H.R. 4726	Udall (NM)	Southern High Plains Groundwater Resources Conservation Act. (Companion Bill to S. 2755)

**THIS WEEK:**

**INDEPENDENCE DAY RECESS** – The Congress will be on Independence Day Recess for the week and reconvene on July 10<sup>th</sup>.

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**LOOKING AHEAD:**

**HOUSE FARM POLICY HEARING SERIES** – The House Agriculture Committee (Chairman Combest, R-TX) will hold a series of hearings on federal farm policy.

July 12	10:00am	1300 Longworth Bldg.
July 19	10:00am	1300 Longworth Bldg.
July 26	10:00am	1300 Longworth Bldg.

**INCREASED PROTECTION FOR NATIONAL FOREST LAND** – The Senate Forests and Public Land Management Subcommittee (Chairman Craig, R-Idaho) of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee will hold a hearing on the draft environmental impact statement related to increased protection for 40 million acres of national forest lands.

July 12 <sup>th</sup>	2:30p.m.	366 Dirksen Bldg.
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**IMPACT OF BANNING METHYL BROMIDE** – Livestock and Horticulture Subcommittee (Chairman Pombo, R-CA) of the House Agriculture Committee will hold a hearing on the impact that banning methyl bromide would have on agriculture. The United States is required to phase out its use over the next five years under the terms of the Montreal Clean Air treaty.

July 13 <sup>th</sup>	10:00am	1300 Longworth Bldg.
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**CONSERVATION AND REINVESTMENT ACT (CARA)** – The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee (Chairman Murkowski, R-Alaska) will mark up legislation that would allocate part of the royalties from offshore drilling to conservation activities instead of continuing to send them to the federal treasury for general use. The Committee is scheduled to mark up the following legislation: S. 2123, H.R. 701, and S. 25. The House passed H.R. 701 on May 18<sup>th</sup>.

July 17 <sup>th</sup> &18 <sup>th</sup>	TBA	366 Dirksen Bldg.
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This markup was scheduled for June 14<sup>th</sup>, re-scheduled for June 21<sup>st</sup>, rescheduled to June 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>, and postponed to July 17<sup>th</sup>&18<sup>th</sup>.

**LOS ALAMOS FIRE** – Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee (Chairman Murkowski, R-AK) will hold an oversight hearing on the investigation of the Cerro Grande Fire in New Mexico. The hearing will also focus on federal fire policies in general.

July 20 <sup>th</sup>	9:30am	366 Dirksen Bldg.
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