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LAST WEEK:

APPROPRIATIONS – No action was taken this week on the FY 2001 Agriculture Appropriations Bill H.R. 4461 and S. 2536.

INDIAN AGRICULTURE – On June 14th the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs (Chairman Campbell, R-CO) held a hearing on Indian Agriculture. Mr. Campbell was concerned that Indians and Alaskan Natives were at some times unable to compete fairly for USDA programs. Deputy Secretary Richard Rominger provided testimony on behalf of the Department. After testifying the Deputy Secretary stayed to hear concerns of other witness. Concerns addressed were the Department’s budget concerning Indians and the accessibility of USDA field offices to Indians.

REFORMULATED GAS, MTBE, AND ETHONAL – The Subcommittee on clean Air, Wetlands, Private Property, and Nuclear Safety (Chairman Inhofe, R-OK) of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee (Chairman Smith, NH) held a hearing on June 15th concerning oxygenated additives used in reformulated gasoline (RFG) required by the Clean Air Act in non-attainment areas. Several Senators, especially from corn producing states, desire to eliminate MTBE and require ethanol for RFG. Testimony clearly supported the control of MTBE, but concerns were raised about the impact to consumers and unknown air quality impacts when switching to ethanol. Chairman Inhofe has introduced a bill, S.1866, that would encourage eliminating MTBE and make the oxygen requirement optional at the discretion of each state.

ESTATE TAXES – On Monday June 12th the House passed H.R. 8, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to phaseout the estate and gift taxes over a 10-year period. The bill is seen as potentially helpful to farm families who suffer tax burdens in settling estate taxes. The Bill is now being prepared for the Senate floor.

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.

| BILL | MEMBER | PURPOSE |
|-------------|---------------|--|
| S. 2697 | Lugar, IN | To reauthorize and amend the Commodity Exchange Act to promote legal certainty, enhance competition, and reduce systemic risk in markets for futures and over-the-counter derivatives, and for other purposes. |
| H.R. 4635 | Young, FL | Making Appropriation for the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development, and for other purposes. (TMDL Funding is affected.) |
| H. R. 4548 | Pombo, CA | To establish a pilot program creating a system of registries of temporary agricultural workers to provide for a sufficient supply of such workers, to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to streamline procedures for the temporary admission and extension of stay of nonimmigrant agricultural workers under the pilot program, and for other purposes. |

THIS WEEK:

TMDL FIELD HEARING – Department Operations, Oversight, Nutrition and Forestry Subcommittee (Chairman Goodlatte, R-VA) of the House Agriculture Committee will hold a field hearing on the impact of the Environmental Protection Agency’s Total Maximum Daily Load rules on agriculture. The regulations would set maximum daily limits on the amount of certain discharges into waterways. NRCS Director of Animal Husbandry and Clean Water Programs, Tom Christensen is scheduled to testify.

June 19th 10:00 a.m. Lonoke, AR

AGRICULTURE BILLS – Senate Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Committee (Chairman Lugar, R-IN) will mark up pending legislation. Included in the mark up will be S. 1938, S. 1066, and S. 1762. S. 1066 would provide for research on best management plans and carbon sequestration. S. 1762 would amend the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act to provide cost share assistance for the rehabilitation of structural measures as part of a water resources project.

June 20th 9:30 a.m. 332 Russell Bldg

COMMODITIES EXCHANGE ACT – Senate Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee (Chairman Lugar, R-IN) will hold a hearing on the Commodity Futures Modernization Act of 2000.

June 21st 10:00 a.m. 106 Dirksen Bldg.

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LOOKING AHEAD:

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. 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 18th.

June 27th & 28th 9:30 a.m. 366 Dirksen Bldg.

This markup was originally scheduled for June 14th.

EPA AND WATER POLLUTION – The House Agriculture Committee (Chairman Combest, R-TX) will hold a hearing on the Environmental Protection Agency’s proposed rules and legislation on the impact of TMDL’s.

June 28th 10:00 a.m. 1300 Longworth Bldg.

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