

**LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY FOR:****March 22, 1999**

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**LAST WEEK -**

**EMERGENCY SUPPLEMENTAL ON SENATE FLOOR -** Last week, the Senate began consideration of S. 544, legislation making emergency supplemental appropriations for Fiscal Year 1999. On Thursday, March 18th, the Senate adopted an amendment offered by Senator Ted Stevens (R-AK) on behalf of Herb Kohl (D-WI), Tom Harkin (D-IA) and Richard Durbin (D-IL). The amendment provides relief from the Section 11 Cap on technical assistance for conservation programs. Specifically, the amendment would provide for \$28 million in Fiscal Year 1999 to pay for technical assistance for the Conservation Reserve Program. The amendment was adopted by unanimous consent. The bill also contains \$100 million for the NRCS Emergency Watershed Program. The Senate will continue consideration of the bill, when the Senate returns to work next week.

**SENATE MARKUP OF WATERSHED PROJECT RESOLUTION -**

On Wednesday, the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee (Chairman John Chafee, R-RI) marked up a resolution authorizing the Middle Deep Red Run small watershed project in Oklahoma. The resolution was briefly discussed and was passed unanimously by the Committee. The project plan includes nine floodwater retarding structures, one multi purpose structure, and associated wildlife mitigation measures under the authority of the NRCS Small Watershed Program, (P.L. 566). The project requires that a similar resolution be passed by the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee before it can be authorized and await funding.

**HOUSE AGRICULTURE HEARING ON DISASTER PROGRAMS -**

On Thursday, March 18, 1999 the House Agriculture Committee (Chairman Larry Combest, R-TX) held a hearing concerning the Department's implementation of disaster payments to farmers. The Committee's main concern was regarding the delay in getting funds out to farmers, since the legislation was passed last October. Secretary Glickman explained reasons for the delay, which included the time needed to hold sign-ups for all eligible procedures. The Secretary also discussed concerns of implementing a new program especially where a cap limits the amount of funds available. Representative Charles Stenholm (D-TX) asked what the Department plans to do when NRCS is not funded to do technical assistance on such Farm Bill programs as CRP after May 15, 1999.

Parks Shackelford of the Farm Service Agency stated that all contracts will be completed and that FSA is looking at the possibility of private entities to be used to do the work.

### **SENATE HEARING ON URBAN SPRAWL AND FARMLAND**

**PROTECTION** - On Thursday, October 18, the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee (Chairmen Chafee, R-RI) held a hearing on the loss of open space and land conservation programs. Witnesses for the hearing included Sen. Mary Landrieu, D-LA; and Sen. Diane Feinstein, D-CA. Other witnesses included Maryland Governor, Parris Glendening, and Ralph Grossi of the American Farmland Trust. Senator Pat Leahy, D-VT expressed specific concerns about the loss of farmland and the need to support farmland protection programs. Governor Glendening echoed these concerns, due to increasing growth and development of rural areas in Maryland. Ralph Grossi stated the need for additional farmland protection efforts as well. Several hearing participants spoke about the President's Lands Legacy Initiative and the need to provide for open space preservation and ensure environmental health.

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### **THIS WEEK -**

**NEPA OVERSIGHT** -The House Resources Forests and Forest Health Subcommittee (Chairman Chenoweth, R-ID) will hold a hearing on the expedited processes used under the National Environmental Policy Act for environmental emergencies.

March 23                      2:00 pm                      1334 Longworth

**PLANT PESTICIDE RULE** - The House Agriculture Subcommittee on Risk management and Specialty Crops (Chairman Ewing, R-IL) will hold a hearing on the Environmental Protection Agency's proposed Plant Pesticide Rule.

March 24                      10:30 am                      1300 Longworth Building

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