

WEEKLY LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY FOR:

May 15, 2000

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LAST WEEK:

SENATE AGRICULTURE APPROPRIATIONS – On Tuesday May 9th the Senate Appropriations Committee (Chairman Stevens, R-AK) marked up funding levels for agriculture agencies and programs for Fiscal Year 2001. In the bill, S. 2536 [Report No. 106-288], funding levels agreed upon by the Committee and are as follows:

Conservation Operations.....	\$714,116,000
Watershed Surveys and Planning.....	\$10,705,000
Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations.....	\$99,443,000
RC & D.....	\$36,265,000
Forestry Incentives Program (FIP).....	\$6,325,000
Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).....	\$174,000,000

These funding levels will now go to the full body of the Senate for consideration. NRCS Legislative Affairs staff will provide more details as numbers are reported and substantiated.

HOUSE AGRICULTURE APPROPRIATIONS – On Wednesday May 10th the House Appropriations Committee (Chairman Young, R-FL) marked up funding levels for agriculture agencies and programs for Fiscal Year 2001. The Committee provided \$676,812,000 for Conservation Operations. NRCS Legislative Affairs staff will provide more details as numbers are reported and substantiated.

CONSERVATION AND REINVESTMENT ACT (CARA) – On Thursday May 11th the House passed H.R. 701, The Conservation and Reinvestment Act, by a vote of 315-102. The bill would provide approximately \$2.8 billion a year, from royalties derived from oil and gas drilling on Federal lands, for the purchase of environmentally sensitive lands and for other conservation programs. H.R. 701 would establish a mandatory

funding source for conservation and land programs. CARA is seen as a major bill in terms of conservation. The NRCS Legislative Staff will provide updates on H.R. 701 as details become available.

LEGISLATION OF NOTE

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

BILL MEMBER PURPOSE

S. 2536		Making appropriations for Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and related Agencies programs for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2001, and for other purposes.
H.R. 4378	Clayton, D-NC	To establish a grant program in the Department of Agriculture to support bilateral exchange programs whereby African-American farmers and other agricultural farming specialist share technical knowledge with African farmers regarding maximization of crop yields, expansion of trade in agricultural products, and ways to improve farming in Africa, and for other purposes.
H.R. 4381	Green, R-WI	To amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide that income averaging for farmers shall be applied by taking into account negative taxable income during the base period years.

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THIS WEEK:

GLOBAL WARMING – The Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee (Chairman McCain, R-AZ) will hold a hearing on global warming on May 17th at 9:30a.m. in room 253 of the Russell Senate Office Building.

AGRICULTURE APPROPRIATIONS – Both the House and Senate are expected to address their respective appropriations bills on Wednesday May 17th. **This information is not yet official and could be subject to change. NRCS Legislative Affairs staff will provide more information as it is reported and substantiated.**

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LOOKING AHEAD:

TMDL HEARING – The 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 proposed total maximum daily load regulations on agriculture. The regulations would set maximum daily limits on the amount of certain discharges into waterways. This field hearing is scheduled to take place at 9:00 a.m. in the Wingate University Fine Arts Center, Wingate, N.C. on May 22nd.

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 Markup is scheduled to take place in room 366 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building on June 14th at an undetermined time.

FARM POLICY FIELD HEARINGS – House Agriculture Committee Chairman, Larry Combest (R-TX) and Ranking Member Charlie Stenholm (D-TX) have announced the schedule of farm policy hearings in 10 cities in regions from March through May, encouraging producers to submit detailed proposals for agriculture policy. Although each hearing may last for up to four hours, full discussion of producers' plans and Committee Members' questions will limit the number of witnesses who can testify at the hearings. Producers may be invited to offer testimony as a witness, or if not selected, producers may either submit specific views for the record, or e-mail informal comments to the Committee. To be considered as a potential witness at the hearing, producers should include information about their agricultural experience and their farming operations. The Committee will select witnesses who are qualified to provide specific testimony about federal farm policy, and answer questions posed by Agriculture Committee Members about policy alternatives.

The schedule for the remaining Farm Policy Field Hearings is as follows:

Friday, May 12

Boise, Idaho

City Council Building

10:00 a.m. Mountain Time

Saturday, May 13

Peoria, Illinois

Peoria Civic Center

8:30 a.m. Central Time
