

WEEKLY LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY FOR:

October 23, 2000

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

For additional information contact:

Tia G. Young
Douglas J. McKalip
F. Brian Moore

=====
LAST WEEK:

AGRICULTURE APPROPRIATIONS CLEARED FOR PRESIDENT'S SIGNATURE - The Senate cleared the \$78.1 billion agriculture appropriation conference report on Wednesday, October 18, 2000 with a 86-8 vote. The House adopted the report with a 340-75 vote last week and the White House has indicated that the President will sign the measure. The conference report exceeds the \$75.3 billion House version and the \$75.4 billion Senate version. A detailed table outlining NRCS funding totals is attached to the summary.

ADJOURNMENT DELAYED WITH SPENDING BILLS UNFINISHED - A fourth Continuing Resolution, H.J. Res. 114, was passed by the House and cleared by the Senate on October 19, 2000. This will keep government programs and agencies operating at existing spending levels until Wednesday, October 25, 2000. Negotiators continue to work on three unfinished bills - Labor-HHS-Education (H.R. 4577), Commerce-Justice-State (H.R. 4690) and Foreign Operations (H.R. 4811). It is expected that any other Continuing Resolutions will be short term and there is no adjournment date set at this time.

AGING WATERSHED INFRASTRUCTURE BILL PASSES AS PART OF GRAIN STANDARDS PACKAGE – On Tuesday, October 17, 2000, the House of Representatives passed H.R. 4788, the Grain Standards and Warehouse Improvement Act of 2000. Included in the legislation, are several other USDA authorization measures including H.R. 728, the Watershed Rehabilitation Amendments. The watershed rehabilitation language was amended to exclude language dealing with the Army Corps of Engineers and assessment of Works Progress Administration (WPA) dams. Concerns over the WPA language had been raised previously by the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee. As amended on Tuesday, H.R. 4788 also contains provisions related to the Packers and Stockyards Act of 1921, transfer of electronic data, and rural energy costs. The bill now goes before the Senate.

CLIMATE CHANGE BILL PASSES THE SENATE – On Wednesday, October 17, 2000, the Senate passed S. 1066, the “Carbon Cycle and Agriculture Best Practices Act”. The legislation was promoted primarily by Sen. Pat Roberts (R-KS). The bill prioritizes carbon cycle research at USDA and directs the NRCS to develop a soil carbon database

in order to assist with climate change policy decisions. The legislation also promotes assistance for agriculture best management practices and natural resource management plans under USDA conservation programs. The legislation now goes to the House of Representatives for consideration, and could be included in end of session legislation.

=====

NEW LEGISLATION -

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

BILL MEMBER PURPOSE

S. 3182	Inhofe, OK	To amend laws relating to the lands of the citizens of the Muscogee (Creek), Seminole, Cherokee, Chickaswa and Choctaw Nations.
H.R. 5459	Sanford, SC	To direct the Secretary of the Army to recommend a water resources development and conservation project for authorization by Congress only if the project has projected benefits that are at least 1.5 times as great as the project's estimated total cost.

THIS WEEK:

When Congress has completed business, it will adjourn the 106th Congress. Election Day is Tuesday, November 7, 2000.

=====