

LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY FOR:**October 25, 1999**

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LAST WEEK -

PRESIDENT SIGNS AGRICULTURE APPROPRIATIONS BILL - On Friday, October 23, the President signed the conference report to H.R. 1906. The bill was signed following contentious debate and partisan disputes. The first controversy occurred when House and Senate GOP leaders worked out a conference report without input from conferees. The legislation also does not include lifting export sanctions on food, regulating dairy pricing, and providing aid to Northeastern and mid-Atlantic farmers.

AGRICULTURE: REHABILITATIONG DAMS - On Wednesday, October 27, the House Agriculture Committee is scheduled to mark up a measure that would authorize money for rehabilitating watershed dams. The bill, HR 728, approved July 20 by the General Farm Commodities, Resources Conservation and Credit Subcommittee, would authorize \$600 million over ten years for the Agriculture Department to provide funding to local governments and community organizations for the rehabilitation of aging dams. Rep. Frank Lucas, R-OK, sponsor of the bill, said within the next ten years, more than 1,300 small flood control dams nationwide will reach the end of their 50-year life expectancy. Lucas said there is presently no source of funding for repairing these dams. And many of them, he said, have endured so much wear and tear that local governments cannot repair them without assistance.

Beginning in 1948, the government has initiated several watershed programs in which USDA has served as a partner with states and local entities, providing cost-sharing for construction, site and geological surveys, and engineering and design services. In turn, local governments and community organizations have covered local construction costs, provided land easements and rights of way, managed the contracted process and maintained the completed facilities. Under the bill, which would amend the Watershed and Flood Prevention Act, the rehabilitation process would work the same way, with roughly 65 percent of costs being covered by the USDA and 35 percent being funded locally. The bill would require the USDA to rank and approve rehabilitation requests based on need and merit and would set aside \$5 million in fiscal 2000 and 2001 for USDA to assess the overall rehabilitation needs of watershed projects nationwide.

DEATH OF SENATOR JOHN CHAFEE - Senator John Chafee, who represented Rhode Island in the Senate for nearly 23 years, died of heart failure Sunday night at Bethesda Naval Hospital. In addition to nearly four terms in the Senate, his political resume included six years as governor, 3-1/2 years as secretary of the Navy and six years as a state representative, including four as House minority leader.

LEGISLATION OF NOTE

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

BILL	MEMBER	PURPOSE
H.R. 2996	Goodlatte, (VA)	Would provide incentives for the Forest Service to improve its accounting and financial reporting systems by temporarily capping discretionary appropriations for the Forest Service until improvements are made.
H.R. 3101	Bryant, (TN)	Would respond to drought conditions in various states by authorizing farmers and ranchers in drought areas to use certain conservation reserve lands for haying and grazing during the remainder of 1999.
H.R. 3109	Roukema, (NJ)	Would amend the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act to establish a grant program for assisting small businesses and agricultural enterprises in meeting disaster related expenses.

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THIS WEEK

FUNDING FOR WATER RESOURCES PROJECT REPAIRS - The House Agriculture Committee (Chairman Combest, R-Texas) will mark up H.R. 728, a bill to amend the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act to authorize the secretary of Agriculture to provide cost share assistance for the rehabilitation of structural measures constructed as part of water resource projects previously funded by the secretary under such act or related laws.

Oct. 27

10:00am

1300 Longworth Bldg.

EPA AGRICULTURAL REGULATORY PROGRAMS - The Department Operations, Oversight, Nutrition and Forestry Subcommittee (Chairman Goodlatte, R-VA) of the House Agriculture Committee will hold a hearing on the new agriculture regulatory programs of the Environmental Protection Agency.

Oct. 28 9:30am 1300 Longworth Bldg.

PACIFIC SALMON TREATY - The Fisheries Conservation, Wildlife and Oceans Subcommittee (Chairman Saxon, R-NJ) of the House Resources Committee will hold a hearing on the Pacific Salmon Treaty.

Oct. 28 11:00am 1324 Longworth Bldg.

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LOOKING AHEAD

ENERGY FULL COMMITTEE MARKUP - The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee (Chairman Murkowski, R-AK) will markup S. 25, a bill to provide coastal impact assistance to state and local governments, to amend the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act Amendments of 1978 and the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965.

date TBA time TBA 366 Dirksen Bldg.

RESOURCES FULL COMMITTEE MARKUP - The House Resources Committee (Chairman Young, R-Alaska) will meet to markup H.R. 701, a bill to provide Outer Continental Shelf Impact Assistance to state and local governments, to amend the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965 and the Urban Park and Recreation Recovery Act of 1978. The committee will also markup H.R. 798, a bill to provide for the permanent protection of the resources of the United States in the year 2000 and beyond.

date TBA time TBA 1324 Longworth Bldg.

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