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**LAST WEEK:**

**AGRICULTURE APPROPRIATIONS** - The White House has received H.R. 4461, the \$78.1 billion agriculture appropriation Conference Report, and the President is expected to sign it. The Conference Report exceeds the \$75.3 billion House version and the \$75.4 billion Senate version. A detailed table outlining NRCS funding was attached to the October 16 edition of the legislative summary.

**ADJOURNMENT DELAYED WITH SPENDING BILLS UNFINISHED** - With spending bills still incomplete, Congress continued work on Continuing Resolutions which would keep the Federal government open through October 31, 2000. The President has demonstrated reluctance to sign stopgap measures for more than 24 hours. The House passed and the Senate cleared on Thursday a sixth Continuing Resolution, H.J. Res.116, that would keep the government in full operation through Friday, October 27, 2000.

**AGING WATERSHED INFRASTRUCTURE BILL CLEARED FOR PRESIDENT AS PART OF GRAIN STANDARDS PACKAGE** – On Tuesday, October 24, 2000, the Senate 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. 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 goes to the White House for signature.

**CONSERVATION SECURITY PROGRAM** - The Conservation Security Act of 2000, S. 3223 was introduced by Sen. Tom Harkin (D-IA) and a companion bill, H.R. 5511 was introduced by Rep. David Minge (D-MN) along with 26 House co-sponsors. The bill amends the Food and Security Act of 1985 to establish a voluntary program of incentive payments to every agricultural producer that applies conservation practices.

The bill establishes a three-tiered system of annual payments ranging from \$20,000 to \$50,000 for producers that implement Conservation Security Plans. Tier I provides incentives for a producer to establish basic conservation practices. Tier II would address priority concerns and Tier III would address all resource concerns of the entire agricultural operation.

Conservation Security Contracts would become the vehicle for the program. Contracts would be a minimum of 5 years for Tier I and 5-10 years for Tiers II and III at the option of the operator. The priorities reflect factors that include; environmental benefits, extent of maintenance for practices, income loss to producers, value for carbon sequestration, importance to local and state conservation needs, cost of monitoring results, participation in watershed efforts, and other factors. Waste storage or treatment facilities are excluded from the program.

CCC funds would be utilized to fund the program. Technical assistance funds would be authorized for both planning and implementation. The program also includes a significant education and monitoring component that can be implemented by local networks of producers.

**BRIEFING ON NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT** - Tom Christensen, Director, Animal Husbandry and Clean Water Programs, and Obie Ashford, National Leader for Animal Husbandry briefed the House Agriculture Committee staff on Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans Technical Guidance (CNMP) on October 24. Questions from the staff reflected interest in the Certification of Planners, the role of States in the revision of NRCS technical standards, and the role of EPA in the process. A similar session will be held for Senate Agriculture Committee in November.

**ESTUARIES** - S.835, the Estuary and Clean Water Act of 2000 conference report was approved by the House and Senate and awaits the Presidents action. The bill would establish a number of National Estuary Programs in specific estuaries throughout the nation. A Council will be established to approve project proposals. The Council will include the Secretary of Agriculture along with other federal and state officials. The Program is a 5 year \$275 million authorization to be administered by the Army Corps of Engineers.

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**NEW LEGISLATION** - The following Bills of significance to NRCS and conservation have been introduced.

<b>BILL</b>	<b>MEMBER</b>	<b>PURPOSE</b>
S. 3223	Harkin (IA)	The bill amends the Food and Security Act of 1985 to establish a voluntary program of incentive payments to every agricultural producer that applies conservation practices. The bill establishes a three tiered system of annual payments ranging from \$20,000 to \$50,000 for producers that implement Conservation Security Plans.
H.R. 5511	Minge (MN)	House companion bill to S. 3223.
S. 3134	Baucus (MT)	Would amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide an income tax credit for certain charitable conservation contributions of land by small farmers and ranchers.

**THIS WEEK:**

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

**A LOOK AHEAD:**

**107<sup>TH</sup> CONGRESS** - Dates have been tentatively set for organizing the 107<sup>th</sup> Congress. During these sessions Committee Chairs are usually chosen and party leaders are elected. The 107<sup>th</sup> Congress convenes on January 3, 2001. The organization meeting schedule is as follows:

<b>House Leadership Elections and Organizational Meetings</b>	
Republicans: November 14-15, 2000	Democrats: November 15 - 17, 2000
<b>Senate Leadership Elections and Organizational Meetings</b>	
Republicans: December 5, 2000	Democrats: December 5-7, 2000
<b>Freshman Orientation</b> December 6-7, 2000	

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