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**LAST WEEK:**

**HOUSE FARM BILL FULL COMMITTEE MARKUP** – The House Agriculture Committee (Chairman Combest, TX) approved a 10-year, \$73.5 billion farm bill (HR 2646) on Friday July 27, 2001. The legislation authorizes many USDA Conservation programs through 2011.

For details on the House legislation, go to <http://agriculture.house.gov/>

**SENATE AGRICULTURE HEARING** - On July 24, 2001, the Senate Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Committee (Chairman Harkin, IA) held a hearing on livestock issues and the farm bill reauthorization. Witnesses represented several livestock groups and sustainable agriculture organizations. All witnesses spoke favorably about the focus on conservation and offered suggested improvements to specific programs such as EQIP and WHIP. Both the National Pork Producers and the Sustainable Agriculture Coalition supported the proposed Conservation Security Program and the draft conservation title to the next farm bill that Sen. Lugar is circulating.

**FY 2001 EMERGENCY AGRICULTURE ASSISTANCE AUTHORIZATION** - On Wednesday, July 25, 2001, the Senate Agriculture Committee (Chairman Harkin, IA) reported S. 1246, Emergency Agriculture Assistance Bill for FY 2001. The bill provides emergency funding to assist with crop losses. The legislation includes funding several conservation programs. These include EQIP - \$250 million, WRP-\$200 million, FPP-\$40 million, WHIP- \$7 million, and EWP-\$10 million for floodplain easements. There is also a \$44 million for technical assistance to assist CRP. The next step is for the full Senate to consider the legislation.

**HOUSE AGRICULTURE BRIEFING** - Carole Jett, Associate Deputy Chief of Programs, Mark Berkland, Director of Conservation Operations, Lee Bensey, Director of Watersheds and Wetlands and NRCS legislative affairs staff met with staff from the office of Rep. Tim Holden (D-PA) to discuss conservation programs. Rep. Holden is the new ranking member of the Subcommittee on Conservation, Credit, Rural Development and Research of the House Agriculture Committee.

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

<b>BILL</b>	<b>MEMBER</b>	<b>PURPOSE</b>
H.R. 2404	Miller, CA	California Water Quality and Reliability Act of 2001.
H.R. 2646	Combest, TX	Amendments to the Food Security Act of 1985
H.R. 2480	Lucas, OK	To reauthorize, improve and expand conservation programs administered by the Department of Agriculture.
H.R. 2501	Young, AL	To reauthorize the Appalachian Regional Development Act of 1965.
H.R. 2542	Putnam, FL	To establish a Farmland Stewardship Program designed to target existing conservation programs to the specific conservation needs and opportunities presented by certain agricultural lands and to authorize the Secretary of Agriculture to enter into stewardship contracts with private owners and operators of these lands to maintain, protect, and care for the natural, environmental, and agricultural resources on these lands.
H.R. 2573	McDermott, WA	To ensure that proper planing is undertaken to secure the preservation and recovery of the salmon and steelhead of the Columbia River Basin.
S. 1191	Kohl, WI	FY 2002 Agriculture Appropriations.
S. 1246	Harkin, IA	Emergency Agriculture Assistance Act of 2001

**AGRICULTURE NOMINATIONS CONFIRMATION HEARING** - The Senate Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee (Chairman Harkin, IA) held a confirmation hearing on pending nominations on July 26, Nominations: Mark Edward Rey to be Under Secretary of Agriculture for Natural Resources and Environment and to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Commodity Credit and Corporation and Hilda Gray Legg to be administrator for the Rural Utilities Service, Department of Agriculture.

**ILLINOIS RIVER 2020 BRIEFING** – On Tuesday, July 24, 2001, Acting Deputy Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment, Dr. R. Mack Gray; USDA Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations, Mary Waters; and NRCS staff attended a meeting with representatives of the Illinois Congressional Delegation, and State Government officials on the Illinois River Basin 2020 program. Governor Ryan and Lt. Governor Corinne Wood have initiated the Illinois Rivers 20/20 restoration program, which would build upon CREP efforts in the basin. The voluntary program would offer additional incentive-based solutions to protect the river and its tributaries over the next 20 years, and utilize many existing Federal Farm Policy Legislation programs and State conservation programs. Senator Richard Durbin and Representative Ray LaHood have led the effort and attended the meeting along with Rep. John Shimkus and Rep. Jerry Weller. Meeting participants discussed the health of the Illinois River watershed and the potential benefits the initiative will provide. Both state government officials and Congressional Members stressed the importance of USDA conservation programs and voluntary assistance. The delegation requested ideas on how to proceed with the

