LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY FOR:

May 21, 2001

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LAST WEEK

ANIMAL FEEDING OPERATIONS HEARING - On May 16, 2001 the Water Resources and Environment Subcommittee of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee (Chairman Duncan, TN) held a hearing on management options for confined animal feeding operations.

The witnesses were primarily farmers and state government officials. The concern of the Subcommittee rests with EPA rules issued in December dealing with agricultural animal waste. Several members of the Subcommittee expressed concern that the rule would drive small and medium animal feeding operations out of business and that the rule was too general. In addition, witnesses stated that farmers should have one consistent set of criteria that are recognized by all relevant federal agencies, including the Department of Agriculture. Another concern is that animal feeding operations vary region by region. Some believe that regulations of these operations should be handled on a local level.

DROUGHT BRIEFING – A briefing was held for staff of Sen. Patty Murray (WA) concerning USDA farm programs that could benefit farmers during periods of draught. Both NRCS and FSA staff discussed USDA programs that could address drought-related needs. Bruce Julian and Victor Cole from the Watershed and Wetlands Division and Melvin Womack, Conservation Incentives Team Leader, discussed Conservation Compliance, Emergency Watershed Protection and Conservation Planning related to special needs during a drought.

WILLIAM SHUSTER SWORN IN AS PENNSYLVANIA CONGRESSMAN-

William Shuster, son of former Congressman Bud Shuster, was sworn in on Tuesday to represent the 9th District of Pennsylvania. Shuster, a businessman, was elected in a special election to fill the seat left vacated by his father who held it from 1973 until his resignation in January 2001.

LEGISLATION OF NOTE

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

BILL	MEMBER	PURPOSE
H.R. 1800	Kind, WI	To establish the Upper Mississippi River Stewardship
		Initiative to monitor and reduce sediment and nutrient loss
		in the Upper Mississippi River.
S. 769	Brownback, KS	To establish a carbon sequestration program and an
		implementing panel within the Department of Commerce
		to enhance international conservation, to promote the role
		of carbon sequestration as a means of slowing the building
		of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, and to reward and
		encourage voluntary, pro-active environmental efforts on
		the issue of global climate change.

THIS WEEK

CAPITOL HILL WORKSHOP-The Capitol Hill Workshop will be conducted this week for 30 NRCS employees. Participants will have the opportunity meet and listen to nationally renowned speakers regarding various aspects of public policy and conservation and have the opportunity to observe one of the several Congressional hearings being conducted on conservation issues.

CONSERVATION SECURITY ACT – The Conservation Security Act of 2001 is expected to be introduced at a public event on May 22, 2001 by Sen. Tom Harkin (IA) and Sen. Gordon Smith (OR). The bill establishes a program of incentive payments for voluntarily adopting and maintaining environmentally beneficial conservation practices on private lands in agricultural production.

May 22 11:00 a.m. NE Capitol Lawn

AGRICULTURE CONSERVATION PROGRAMS - The Conservation, Credit, Rural Development and Research Subcommittee (Chairman Lucas, OK) of the House Agriculture Committee will hold a hearing on agricultural conservation programs. Our witness is Tom Weber, Deputy Chief for Programs.

May 23 2:30 p.m. 1300 Longworth

AGRICULTURE FREE TRADE PROPOSALS - The House Agriculture Committee (Chairman Combest-TX) will hold an oversight hearing on agriculture trade in the western hemisphere, including a review of the planned Free Trade Association of the Americas and Administration proposals on trade. The witnesses are Secretary of Agriculture, Ann M. Veneman and Robert B. Zoellick, U.S. Trade Representative.

May 23 10:00 a.m. 1300 Longworth

CARBON SEQUESTRATION HEARING – The Science, Technology, and Space Subcommittee of the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee held a hearing on carbon sequestration. John Kimble, NRCS Research Soil Scientist, will be testifying regarding carbon sequestration processes and methods.

May 23 2:00 p.m. Location TBA

LOOKING AHEAD

FEDERAL FARM POLICY- The General Farm Commodities and Risk Management Subcommittee (Chairman Chambliss, GA) of the House Agriculture Committee will hold a field hearing on federal farm policy.

June 23 9:00 a.m. Macon, GA