

LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY FOR:**May 7, 2001**

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

For additional information contact:

Douglas J. McKalip
Eric W. Carlson
Sharyn C. Alvarez

LAST WEEK

BUDGET AGREEMENT DELAYED - The House and Senate FY 2002 budget resolution conference report, House Resolution 83, was not able to be completed in time for action this week. An agreement reached by House and Senate negotiators announced projected spending over the next 11 years. Agriculture has \$66.15 billion held in reserve for reauthorization of farm support programs between 2003 and 2011. The resolution report is expected to be voted upon early this week.

NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT BRIEFING - On Monday, April 30, 2001, The Upper Mississippi River Task Force sponsored a briefing to congressional staff members to provide innovative strategies for nutrient management. Rep. Ron Kind- WI, and the Upper Mississippi River Congressional Task Force Liaison sponsored the briefing. The speakers included Tom Christensen, NRCS Director- Animal Husbandry and Clean Water Programs. Speakers discussed a range of nutrient management strategies such as the success of nutrient reduction in the Chesapeake Bay and incentives for nutrient management in the Farm Bill, such as nutrient trading. They also discussed the value of sustainable agriculture, community initiatives and programs, the Gulf Hypoxia Action Plan, and USDA approaches for reducing nutrients in water resources.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND GREENHOUSE GASES OVERSIGHT HEARING -On Wednesday, May 2, 2001, the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee (Chairman Smith, NH) held an oversight hearing on the science of global climate change and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The purpose of the hearing was to determine from the witnesses the state of the science of climate change; to determine what is currently understood and not understood about climate change; what research still needs to be done; what can be accomplished and at what cost and what role the federal government should play in addressing the issue.

Witnesses included representatives from academia, business and research institutions. Dr. Rattan Lal, Cooperating Scientist from Ohio State University's School of Natural Resources, suggested that permanent conservation tillage, CRP and WRP were programs that could improve the change in climate by preserving soil. Dr. Lal said a fact sheet outlining what carbon sequestration is and how it can aid climate control should be developed for marketing so developing nations have a better understanding of the United State's position on sequestration. A Committee Member asked Dr. Lal what federal

programs would implement the kind of agricultural and forest solutions he believed in. Dr. Lal replied by stating that CRP, conservation tillage on a permanent basis, WRP, planting trees and cover crops and putting biomass on any available land would all be positive contributions.

SENATE FY 2002 AGRICULTURE APPROPRIATIONS – The Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture (Chairman, Sen. Thad Cochran-MS) held a hearing on May 3, 2001. Sen. Tim Johnson (SD) asked about promotion of programs such as WRP, WHIP, and CRP that fit in the “green box” with the World Trade Organization, thus potentially helping with trade efforts. Acting Deputy Under Sec. Hunt Shipman, Farm and Foreign Agriculture Service, responded that through the Farm Bill reauthorization process all options for conservation programs were possible. In response to questions about the role of agriculture and energy, he mentioned the CRP biomass pilot projects and the promotion of other uses of commodities such as ethanol.

LEGISLATION OF NOTE

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

BILL	MEMBER	PURPOSE
S. 785	Brownback, KS Introduced 4/26/01	To Amend the Food Security Act of 1985, to require the Secretary of Agriculture to establish a carbon sequestration program to permit owners and operators of land to enroll the land in the program to increase the sequestration of carbon.

THIS WEEK

TOTAL MAXIMUM DAILY LOADS - The Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Geological Survey, America's Clean Water Foundation and the Interstate Commission for the Potomac River Basin will sponsor a briefing for congressional staff on TMDLs. The briefing will focus on the means of establishing a scientific basis for TMDLs.

May 7

11:00 a.m.

2237 Rayburn

WATER QUALITY BRIEFING - Rep. Walter Jones (NC) has invited NRCS to brief staff and farmers on the impact of NRCS nutrient management policy on livestock operations in North Carolina on May 10, 2001. EPA has also been invited to outline proposed water quality permit changes.

USDA CONFIRMATION HEARINGS – On May 9, 2001 the Senate Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee (Chairman Lugar, IN) will conduct a hearing to consider nominations for the positions at the Department of Agriculture. Not all nominations are likely to be reviewed by the Committee and additional hearings will be scheduled for a later date.

