WEEKLY LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY FOR: October 29, 2001

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:

SENATE PASSES FY 2002 AGRICULTURE APPROPRIATIONS - The Senate passed the fiscal 2002 agriculture appropriations. The bill, H.R.2330, passed on a 91-5 vote. The House had already passed a different version of H.R. 2330. A conference with the House is expected in the near future. Conferees on the part of the Senate are: Sen. Herbert Kohl(WI), Sen. Tom Harkin (IA), Sen. Byron Dorgan(ND), Sen. Dianne Feinstein (CA), Sen. Richard Durbin(IL), Sen. Tim Johnson(SD), Sen. Patty Murray(WA), Sen. Robert Byrd (WV), Sen. Thad Cochran (MS), Sen. Arlen Specter(PA), Sen. Christopher Bond (MO), Sen. Mitch McConnell (KY), Sen. Conrad Burns(MT), Sen. Larry Craig(ID), and Sen. Ted Stevens(AK).

A summary of reported funding for NRCS is as follows:

Senate Bill

Conservation Operations*\$	807,454,000
Watershed Surveys and Planning\$	10,960,000
Watershed Rehabilitation\$	10,000,000
Watershed and Flood Prev. Ops\$	100,413,000
Resource Cons. and Development\$	48,048,000
Forestry Incentives Program\$	7,811,000

^{*} The increase from the Senate Committee mark is \$5 million to work with the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service on a pilot project on migratory birds.

CONTINUING RESOLUTION - On October 25, the House passed and the Senate cleared H. J. Res. 70 the fourth continuing resolution that will keep the government in full operation through November 16, 2001. The White House has received the resolution and the President is expected to sign it before the current resolution expires.

FARM BILL FIELD HEARING - On October 27, the Senate Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry held a field hearing on the 2002 Farm Bill in City Council Chambers, Boise City Hall, Boise, Idaho. The hearing was conducted by Senator Mike Crapo. Senator Crapo began the hearing by stating that it would be difficult to complete a Farm Bill this year. He said that he wanted to gain the insight and views from a broad range of interests about the direction that Farm Policy should take. The hearing included a long list of representatives from farm interest groups. Also, the Idaho State Department of Agriculture, Idaho Association of Conservation Districts, Ducks Unlimited, and Nature Conservancy provided testimony as well. Much emphasis in the hearing was placed on the need to ensure that program funding in the next Farm Bill be provided in a non-trade distorting fashion that will be declared "green box" with respect to overseas trade agreements. The Idaho Association of Conservation Districts asserted the need for full funding for technical assistance to accompany conservation programs, in addition to requesting amendments to the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) to make program participation more widespread. Specifically, the organization called for raising the cap on maximum EOIP contract size, and also removing the cap on maximum livestock operation size that can qualify for assistance. Other groups stated support for re-authorizing programs such as the Wetlands Reserve, Conservation Reserve, and Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program.

LEGISLATION OF NOTE

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

BILL	MEMBER	PURPOSE
H.R. 3121	Moran, KS	To further continue economic viability in the communities on the High Plains by promoting sustainable groundwater management of the Ogallala Aquifer.
S. 1566	Reid, NV	To amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to modify and expand the credit for electricity produced from renewable resources and waste produces.

LOOKING AHEAD:

FARM BILL FULL COMMITTEE MARKUP The Senate Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee (Chairman Harkin, IA) will begin to mark up provisions of an omnibus farm bill that would reauthorize and restructure a broad range of farm assistance programs

Date TBA Time TBA 328A Russell Bldg.