WEEKLY LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY FOR:

October 8, 2001

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LAST WEEK:

Sharyn C. Alvarez

HOUSE PASSES FARM BILL- On October 5, 2001, the House passed H.R. 2646, as amended, the Farm Security Act of 2001 by a vote of 291 - 120. The legislation provides authorization for many agricultural and conservation programs until 2011. A brief summary of the USDA Conservation programs changes:

Farm Security Act of 2001 H.R. 2646 - Conservation Provisions Summary

ECARP

• Eliminates priority areas

Conservation Reserve Program

- Reauthorize until 2011
- Adds improving wildlife as goal
- Eliminates the 10% marginal pasture to trees replacing with converted to wetlands and wildlife
- Changes the water quality goal for croplands to include soil, water and air
- Can include surface and groundwater conservation as a Secretary's discretionary goal
- Increases cap to 39.2 million acres
- Adds haying, grazing, wind turbines, biomass production as eligible uses

Wetlands Reserve Program

- Funding is 150,000 acres annually until 2011 from CCC
- Eliminates the allocation among easements and restoration

Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program

• Funding is ramped up to \$50 million annually from CCC

Farmland Protection Program

- Adds historic and archeological value for eligibility
- Funding is \$50 million annually from CCC
- Expands eligible organizations to non-profits and tribes

Small Watersheds

• Funding is authorized for \$15 million annually for rehabilitation

Environmental Quality Incentive Program

- Reauthorize through 2011 with no change in administration
- 1 to 10/year contracts and adds incentive payments
- Encourages compliance with laws, sustainable grazing, and beneficial use of animal manure
- Payment limits increased to \$50,000/yr and \$200,000 per contract
- Funding is ramped up to \$60 million for groundwater conservation and irrigation efficiency
- Funding is ramped up to \$1.5 billion annually from CCC
- Technical assistance to be reevaluated by Secretary
- Third party can provide technical assistance once certified under new regulations
- Adds a new purpose for renewable energy

Resource Conservation and Development Program

• Permanent authorization; adds tribes to eligibility

Grassland Reserve Program

- New Program to be administered by FSA
- 2 million acres cap for 10 30 year and permanent easements
- Funding is capped at \$254 million from CCC

Farmland Stewardship

• New program that uses WRP, FLEP, WHIP, FPP, through contracts to groups that petition the Secretary

Forestry Incentive Program

• Repealed, and replaced with a new program, Forestry Land Enhancement Program (FLEP) to administered by NRCS at \$20 million annually from CCC

Conservation Farm Option

Repealed

Environmental Easement

Repealed

National Natural Resources Foundation

• Repealed

The floor action included over three hours of debate over an amendment proposed by Rep. Boehlert (NY), Rep. Kind (WI), Rep. Gilcrest (MD), and Rep. Dingell (MI) that would have shifted \$1.9 billion from the commodity title to the conservation title. The amendment failed by a 200-226 vote.

FORESTRY BRIEFING- On October 2, 2001, NRCS' Forest Incentives Program Manager, Robert Molleur, briefed Senate Agriculture committee staff regarding NRCS

forestry programs. The Committee was interested in the delivery of forestry programs through local NRCS offices.

NESHAMINY WATERSHED- On October 3, 2001, Deputy Undersecretary for Natural Resources, Dr. Mack Gray, Deputy Chief for Programs, Thomas Weber, and Associate Deputy Chief for Programs, Jose Acevedo, briefed the staff of Rep. Greenwood (PA) regarding the progress of revising the Neshaminy Creek watershed project in southeast PA to focus on non-structural measures for flood protection.

THIS WEEK:

INFRASTRUCTURE SECURITY SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING - The Water Resources and Environment Subcommittee (Chairman John Duncan, TN) of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee will hold a hearing on infrastructure security.

October 10 10:00 a.m. 2167 Rayburn

STORM PREPAREDNESS SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING - The Environment, Technology and Standards Subcommittee (Chairman Vernon Ehlers, MI) of the House Science Committee will hold a hearing on U.S. preparedness for severe storms.

October 11 10:00 a.m. 2318 Rayburn

ECO-TERRORISM OVERSIGHT HEARING - The Forests and Forest Health Subcommittee (Chairman Scott McInnis, CO) of the House Resources Committee will hold an oversight hearing on eco-terrorism.

October 16 Time TBA 1334 Longworth

LOOKING AHEAD:

BIO-TERRORISEM PREPARADNESS SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING - The Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee (Chairman Jim Greenwood, PA) of the House Energy and Commerce Committee will hold a hearing on federal bio-terrorism preparedness programs from a public health perspective.

October 19 10:00 a.m. 2322 Rayburn

USE OF MTBE IN GASOLINE SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING - The Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee (Chairman Jim Greenwood, PA) of the House Energy and Commerce Committee will hold a hearing on issues concerning the use of the chemical MTBE in reformulated gasoline. The date and time is to be announced.
