LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY FOR: **September 23, 2002**

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LAST WEEK

LEGISLATION OF NOTE
The following Bills of significance to NRCS and conservation have been introduced:

Bill	Sponsor	Purpose
Cubin, WY	H.R. 5383	To provide emergency assistance to agricultural producers.

SENATE AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE HEARING - On September 17, Secretary
Veneman testified before the Senate Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Committee (Chairman,
Harkin D- IA) to discuss progress regarding implementation of the 2002 Farm Bill, including
conservation programs. The Secretary said that the changes in the conservation policy support in
the 2002 Farm Bill the Administration's commitment to a voluntary approach and provide
producers with a comprehensive portfolio of conservation options including cost-share,
incentive, land retirement, and easement programs. NRCS Chief, Bruce Knight accompanied the
Secretary.

Several Members had questions regarding conservation programs. These included the concern
regarding technical assistance funding for WRP and FPP, EQIP rulemaking, and the progress to
establish the Grassland Reserve and Conservation Security Programs.

PENNSYLVANIA WATERSHED BRIEFING - On September 19, Deputy Undersecretary
Mack Gray met with Rep. Greenwood (PA) concerning the progress of the Neshaminy Creek
Watershed Protection project in Bucks County, Pennsylvania. Dr. Grey and NRCS Director of
Watersheds and Wetlands, Lee Bensey, provided an update on the status of the NRCS small
watershed program and a progress report on Neshaminy Creek.

WETLANDS PROTECTION HEARING - On September 19, the Committee on Government
Reform, Subcommittee on Energy Policy, Natural Resources and Regulatory Affairs (Chairman
Ose, CA), held a hearing concerning wetlands regulations through the Clean Water Act
following the Solid Waste Agency of Northern Cook County vs. Army Corps of Engineers
(SWANCC) Decision by the US Supreme Court. The SWACC decision involved protecting
isolated wetland areas not adjacent to navigable waters. Testimony by the Department of the
Army, EPA, and the Department of Justice indicated a new rulemaking process in the future is
needed based on the guidance provided in the SWANCC ruling.

KANSAS EQIP BRIEFING - On September 20, Peter Smith NRCS Resource Economics and Social Science Division Director, and NRCS Conservation Operations staff met with Margaret Fast, Kansas Manager of Water Planning and staff from Sen. Brownback's (KS) office, to discuss EQIP funding for water conservation. Kansas is using several state initiatives to partner with NRCS to provide net savings in water use for the Ogallala aquifer by agricultural producers.

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THIS WEEK

AGRICULTURE DEPARTMENT CIVIL RIGHTS PROGRAM SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING – The Department Operations, Oversight, Nutrition and Forestry Subcommittee (Chairman Goodlatte, VA) of the House Agriculture Committee will hold a hearing on the civil rights programs of the Agriculture Department.

September 25   10:00 a.m.   1300 Longworth Building

WATER RESOURCES PROJECTS FULL COMMITTEE MARK-UP - The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee (Chairman Jeffords, VT), will mark-up draft legislation that would authorize water resources development projects.

September 26   Time TBA   406 Dirksen Building

KLAMATH BASIN MEETING- On Friday September 27, Lee Bensey, NRCS Director Watersheds and Wetlands Division will meet with Commissioners from the Upper Klamath Basin to discuss water issues in the region. Rep. Greg Walden (OR) requested the meeting.

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LOOKING AHEAD

IMPROVING WATER DELIVERIES TO THE EVERGLADES SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING – The Water Resources and Environment Subcommittee (Chairman Duncan, TN) of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee will hold a hearing on efforts to balance improved water deliveries to the Everglades National Park with environmental and flood protection needs.

October 1   1:00 p.m.   2167 Rayburn Building

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