

WEEKLY LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY FOR:

July 23, 2001

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LAST WEEK:

CONFERENCE ON FY 2001 SUPPLEMENTAL – On Thursday, July 19, 2001, House and Senate Conferees completed work on the FY 2001 Supplemental Appropriations Bill (H.R. 2216). The Conference agreement received expedited floor consideration and passage in both chambers on Friday. The legislation contains \$35.5 million for the NRCS Emergency Watershed Protection Program for Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, Oklahoma, Texas, West Virginia, and Wisconsin

FY 2002 AGRICULTURE APPROPRIATIONS BILL - On Tuesday, July 17, 2001, the Senate Appropriations Committee (Chairman Byrd, WV) reported the Agriculture Appropriations Bill for FY 2002.

A summary of reported funding for NRCS is as follows:

	Senate Bill	Increase from FY '01
Conservation Operations.....	802,454,000.....	89,909,000
Watershed Surveys and Planning.....	10,960,000.....	116,000
Watershed Rehabilitation.....	10,000,000.....	(new account)
Watershed and Flood Prev. Ops.....	100,413,000.....	1,189,000
Resource Cons. and Development.....	48,048,000.....	6,125,000
Forestry Incentives Program.....	7,811,000.....	1,500,000

HOUSE FARM BILL FULL COMMITTEE HEARINGS – The House Agriculture Committee (Chairman Combest, TX) held a series of hearings on Farm Policy concept papers developed by the Committee. The concept papers lay out a broad spending plan

on agricultural programs including substantial increases for conservation programs. The Committee's goal is to conduct a markup of proposed legislation by August 3, 2001. The Committee's concept papers can be viewed at the following Internet website:

<http://agriculture.house.gov/farmbill.htm>

The three hearings this week included many farm and conservation groups. Farm groups were very supportive of the proposal to increase EQIP funding to \$1.2 billion annually, with 50% going to livestock operations, suggesting other technical changes in EQIP. The farm groups were also supportive of the proposed increase in WHIP to \$25 million annually.

Conservation groups were supportive of the other proposals to continue annual funding for WRP at 100,000 acres, FPP at \$50 million, Small Watershed Rehabilitation at \$15 million, and a combined FIP/SIP at \$10 million.

Farm groups and some members debated the proposal to increase CRP to a 40 million acre cap. Some Committee members favor a 45 million acre cap while farm groups favor no increase from the present cap. Rep. Frank Lucas, OK, Chair of the Conservation subcommittee, stated "the Committee is very supportive of conservation funding and although you may not be satisfied with the numbers for a specific program, look at the entire package in its totality".

LEGISLATION OF NOTE

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

BILL	MEMBER	PURPOSE
H.R. 2404	Rep. Miller (CA)	California Water Quality and Reliability Act of 2001
S. 1191	Sen. Kohl (WI)	FY 2002 Agriculture Appropriations

HOUSE COMMITTEE NEW ASSIGNMENTS – Rep. Tim Holden, PA is now the ranking member of the Subcommittee on Conservation, Credit, Rural Development and Research of the House Agriculture Committee as a result of Rep. Earl Hilliard, AL, becoming the ranking member of [the Committee on International Relations Subcommittee on International Economic Policy and Trade](#).

SENATE AGRICULTURE BRIEFING-On July 18, 2001, the Senate Agriculture Committee staff held a briefing on proposed legislation soon to be introduced by Sen. Lugar (IN) on USDA conservation programs. Over 20 farm and conservation

organizations asked questions about the proposal. The proposal would increase conservation funding \$2 billion annually from 2003 through 2011 with \$1.5 billion to be funded through EQIP and the remainder increasing funding for WHIP, WRP, and FPP and a new program to protect drinking water. The staff requested specific comments and suggestions from the groups on how the bill could be improved.

NESHAMINY CREEK FLOOD PROTECTION- Dr. R. Mack Gray, along with OGC staff, and Robin Heard, Pennsylvania State Conservationist, met with Rep. James Greenwood (PA) concerning the Neshaminy Creek watershed project. Recent floods in the area along with local controversy concerning a long proposed dam led the project sponsors to request an acceleration of the planning and design of non structural measures to prevent flooding of homes and businesses. The NEPA process necessary to complete the planning and construction was discussed along with the time and staff needs to complete the project.

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THIS WEEK:

HOUSE FARM BILL FULL COMMITTEE HEARING - The House Agriculture Committee (Chairman Combest, TX) will hold hearings to mark up a draft 2002 farm bill. The markup may continue through the weekend. Secretary Ann Veneman is rescheduling testifying to accommodate her attending the memorial service for four Forest Service firefighters on Tuesday.

July 26	9:30 a.m.	1300 Longworth Building
July 27	9:00 a.m.	1300 Longworth Building

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