

LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY FOR:**June 17, 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 |
|-------------|----------------|--|
| S. 2544 | Levin, MI | To amend the Federal Water Pollution Control Act to authorize the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency to make grants for remediation of sediment contamination in areas of concern, to authorize assistance fore research and development of innovative technologies for such remediation . |
| S. 2604 | Enzi, WY | To amend the Endangered Species Act of 1973 to require the federal government to assume all costs relating to implementation of and compliance with that Act. |
| S. 2608, | Hollings,SC | To amend the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972 to authorize the acquisition of coastal areas in order better to ensure their protection from conversion or development; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation. |

TRADING WATER POLLUTION REDUCTION CREDITS SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING – The Water Resources and Environment Subcommittee (Chairman Duncan, TN) of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee held a hearing on June 13, 2002, in implementation by EPA of a new water quality trading program, which allows trading between point and non-point sources of pollution. NRCS Chief, Bruce Knight, testified on behalf of the Department. Chief Knight stressed the importance of voluntary, market-based options for farmers and ranchers to improve water quality. He discussed the features of a trading policy supported by USDA should also include flexibility, a simple structure between willing buyers and sellers, and should complement existing USDA conservation programs. In addition, the policy should recognize the complexity to obtain reliable estimates of nutrient and sediment load reductions that are dependent on specific site conditions.

Testimony from other public witnesses described specific pilot projects in Alabama, North Carolina, and Connecticut that have been successful in trading pollutants on a watershed basis. Many questions from Members related to the challenges to measure specific pollutants and the importance to avoid trading toxic substances in any trading policy. Several witnesses mentioned the value of NRCS expertise to assist with non-point source pollution abatement.

THIS WEEK

SOUND SCIENCE AND THE ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT FULL

COMMITTEE HEARING - The House Resources Committee (Chairman Hansen, UT) will hold hearings on a bill that would require the Secretary of the Interior, when making determinations under the Endangered Species Act, to “give greater weight to any scientific or commercial study or other information that is empirical or has been field-tested or peer-reviewed.”

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| June 18 | 2:00 p.m. | 1334 Longworth Bldg. |
| June 19 | 2:00 p.m. | 1334 Longworth Bldg. |

GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE FULL COMMITTEE HEARING - The Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee (Chairman Hollings, SC) will hold a hearing on global climate change, focusing on the U.S. Climate Action Report.

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| June 20 | 10:00 a.m. | 253 Russell Building |
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LOOKING AHEAD

FISCAL 2002 SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS – The House and Senate conferees will meet to consider legislation that would make supplemental appropriations for fiscal 2002. The date and time has not been determined. The Senate conferees are Sen. Bryd, WV; Sen. Inouye, HI; Sen. Hollings, SC; Sen. Leahy, VT; Sen. Harkin, IA; Sen. Milkulski, MD; Sen. Reid, RI; Sen. Kohl, WI; Sen. Murray, WA Sen. Dorgan, ND; Sen. Feinstein, CA; Sen. Durbin, IL; Sen. Johnson, SD; Sen. Landrieu, LA Sen. Reed, RI; Sen. Stevens, AK; Sen. Cochran, MS; Sen. Specter, PA; Sen. Domenici, NM; Sen. Bond, MO; Sen. McConnell, KY; Sen. Burns, MT; Sen. Shelby, AL; Sen. Gregg, NH; Sen. Bennett, UT; Sen. Campbell, CO Sen. Craig, ID Sen. Hutchinson, AR; Sen. DeWine, OH.

FISCAL 2003 AGRICULTURE APPROPRIATIONS – The Agriculture, Rural Development, FDA and Related Agencies Subcommittee (Chairman Bonilla, TX) of the House Appropriations Committee will mark up draft legislation that would make fiscal 2003 appropriations for programs under its jurisdiction. The date for the mark up has not been determined.
