

LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY FOR:**May 20, 2002**

NRCS, Office of Legislative Affairs
 Room 5121, South Agriculture Bldg.
 (202) 720-2771
www.nrcs.usda.gov/about/legislative/
 For additional information contact:
 Douglas J. McKalip
 Eric W. Carlson
 Sharyn C. Alvarez

LAST WEEK**LEGISLATION OF NOTE**

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

Bill	Sponsor	Purpose
S. 2528	Domenici, NM	A bill to establish a National Drought Council within the Federal Emergency Management Agency, to improve national drought preparedness, mitigation, and response efforts, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works

FARM SECURITY AND RURAL INVESTMENT ACT OF 2002 - On Monday, May 13, President Bush signed into law the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002. The public law number is P. L. 107-171 (115 Stat. 134).

EWP FUNDS FOR NEW MEXICO FIRES - On Monday May 13, 2002 Secretary Ann Veneman announced the release of \$575,000 in financial and technical assistance to New Mexico to assist in recovery efforts resulting from recent wildfires.

There is an emergency need to protect the soils in the watershed area where the fires occurred. The Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWP) is to undertake emergency measures and safeguard lives and property from floods, drought, fires and other natural disasters that impair watersheds. The Natural Resources Conservation Service and the U. S. Forest Service are coordinating reseeding on private lands upstream from Lincoln National Forest.

IMPLEMENTAING INVASIVE SPECIES ACT SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING –

On May 15, 2002 the Water Resources Subcommittee (Chairman Duncan, TN) and Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation Subcommittee (Chairman LoBiondo, NJ) of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee held a joint hearing on the National Invasive Species Act of 1996 (P. L. 104-332).

Testimony was provided by witnesses from the U. S. Coast Guard, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Chamber of Shipping of America, the American Association of Port Authorities, the Lake Carriers Association, the Northeast-Midwest Institute and the Ocean Conservancy.

Members of the Committee expressed concerned with the cost of combating invasive species in American waterways. Members asked about steps that have been taken by the Coast Guard and NOAA to implement the National Invasive Species Act since 1996, including research initiatives. The hearing focused on the origin of invasive species in American waterways, particularly the Zebra Mussel. There was discussion on the merits of current ballast water management practices and the lack of participation by vessel operators to voluntarily comply with the program as well as the lack of guidelines for those who do voluntarily comply. The committee expressed desire to see the Coast Guard and NOAA gather all necessary information and expertise from the leaders in the field of invasive species in order to develop a final policy aimed to keep invasive species from impacting more natural habitat along the nation's rivers, lakes and waterways.

SALMON RESTORATION ASSISTANCE SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING – The Oceans, Atmosphere and Fisheries Subcommittee (Chairman Kerry, MA) of the Senate Commerce Science and Transportation Committee held a hearing on May 14, 2002, on legislation that would authorize the secretary of Commerce to provide financial assistance to Alaska, Washington, Oregon, California and Idaho and tribes in the region for salmon habitat restoration projects in coastal waters and inland areas. Witnesses provided examples of restoration that could be funded through this legislation such as riparian buffers and farm water conservation measures.

MIDWEST LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT - On Monday May 13, 2002, participants in the NRCS Midwest Leadership Development Program heard from Dave White, State Conservationist for Montana, Kevin Brown, State Conservationist for Ohio, Carole Jett, Associate Deputy Chief for Programs, and Gary Margheim, Special Assistant to the Chief, regarding the 2002 Farm Bill process. Both Kevin Brown and Dave White were detailed to the Senate Agriculture Committee and shared their insights about the work of staff and Members on the Farm Bill. Carole Jett discussed the NRCS Farm Bill teams that have worked for the past two years to provide timely and accurate information regarding conservation programs. Gary Margheim summarized the Administration's actions that impacted the Conservation Title of the Farm Bill.

=====

LOOKING AHEAD

FY 2002 SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS FULL COMMITTEE MARKUP

The Senate Appropriations Committee (Chairman Byrd, WV) will mark up legislation that would make supplemental appropriations for fiscal year 2002.

Date TBA

Time TBA

S-128 Capitol Building

