

LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY FOR:**May 28, 2001**

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LAST WEEK

CONSERVATION PROGRAMS HEARING – On Wednesday, the Subcommittee on Conservation, Credit, Rural Development and Research (Chairman Lucas, OK) held a hearing on USDA conservation programs. Witnesses at the hearing included NRCS Deputy Chief for Programs, Tom Weber, and Bob Stephenson, FSA Director of Conservation Programs. Chairman Lucas began the hearing by stating the importance of conservation to the next Farm Bill. He added that funding would be a key issue, and that the Subcommittee needed to take a close look at how conservation dollars are utilized. Ranking Member Earl Hilliard (AL) stated in his opening remarks the need to provide enhanced assistance limited resource farmers. He also asked for details about the Administration's budget request for the Forestry Incentives Program (FIP). He stated support for the program and desire to see funding provided.

Tom Weber reviewed NRCS programs and outlined funding for conservation programs since the 1996 Farm Bill. He also highlighted the demand and backlog that each conservation program carries. Chairman Lucas asked about the NRCS watershed program and asked for detailed information about the rehabilitation backlog requests the agency has received to date. Rep. Jerry Moran (KS) discussed his recently introduced legislation, which would reauthorize and increase funding for several NRCS programs. He asked about the ratio of requests for various easement options under WRP. He also asked about the potential workload and cost of implementing AFO-CAFO rules and TMDL. In addition, Rep. Moran expressed interest in the types of technical changes that could be made to EQIP to further assist animal agriculture.

Rep. John Thune (SD) emphasized the recently-introduced, Conservation Security Act, and technical assistance that be required to implement it. Rep. Tom Osborne (NE) asked for further details about the program backlog, which was approximated to be \$4 billion to \$5 billion. Rep. Ron Kind also discussed his Upper Miss. River Conservation legislation and discussed the strong demand around the nation for programs like WRP. Rep. Mark Kennedy (MN) asserted that block grants to state and local agencies might be a needed alternative, and Rep. Adam Putnam asked about the utilization of third-party vendors and also how conservation gains are quantified. Chairman Lucas closed out the first panel of the hearing by asking for follow-up information about funding resources are allocated internally. He also asked if conservation program funding is increased, how many people it would take to meet the workload. The second panel of the hearing included the

Livestock Coalition, represented by Wythe Willey of the National Cattlemen's Beef Association; Bill Horan of the Iowa Corn Growers on behalf of the Crop Coalition; and John Lincoln representing the American Farm Bureau Federation.

CARBON SEQUESTRATION HEARING – The Science, Technology, and Space Subcommittee of the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee held a hearing on carbon sequestration on May 23, 2001. John Kimble, NRCS Research Soil Scientist, testified regarding carbon sequestration processes and methods. Sen. Sam Brownback (KS) chaired the meeting that heard from several witnesses about projects in quantifying the sequestration of carbon from forests. All witnesses agreed that accurate, replicable methods are being used to account for carbon stock changes due to conservation practices. One witness stated the important value of the NRCS Soils Survey and Forest Service forest inventory to digitize data that helps the United States with a competitive advantage to account for carbon stocks.

SEN. JEFFORDS BECOMES INDEPENDENT – The announcement of Sen. James Jeffords (VT) to become an independent will impact the Senate by giving the Democratic party a 50-49 majority. It is expected to impact Committee leadership and the power sharing agreement that has been used thus far the 107th Congress.

PASSING OF REP. JOE MOAKLEY – On Monday, Rep, Joseph Moakley (D-MA) died at Bethesda Naval Medical Center at 3:30 p.m., after going into the hospital for a blood transfusion. He had fought leukemia. Mr. Moakley, who represented South Boston in Congress since 1973 also served as the Ranking Member of the House Rules Committee. He was 74 years old.

SCARBOROUGH RESIGNS - Rep. Joe Scarborough (FL) announced his resignation from Congress effective June 6, 2001. He came to Washington as part of the Class of 1994. He currently serves as Chair of the House Civil Service Subcommittee. His aides cite spending more time with family as his reason for resigning.

CONFIRMATIONS FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE - On May 22, 2001 the Senate finalized the confirmations of several Department of Agriculture appointees.

- Lou Gallegos, of New Mexico, to be Assistant Secretary for Administration.
- Mary Kirtley Waters, of Virginia, to be Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations.
- Eric M. Bost, of Texas, to be Under Secretary of Agriculture for Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services.
- William T. Hawks, of Mississippi, to be Under Secretary of Agriculture for Marketing and Regulatory Programs.
- J. B. Penn, of Arkansas, to be Under Secretary of Agriculture for Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services.

CONSERVATION SECURITY ACT – The Conservation Security Act of 2001 was introduced at a public event on May 22, 2001 by Sen. Tom Harkin (IA) and Sen. Gordon Smith (OR). The bill establishes a program of incentive payments for voluntarily adopting and maintaining environmentally beneficial conservation practices on private lands in agricultural production.

LEGISLATION OF NOTE

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

BILL	MEMBER	PURPOSE
H. R. 1309	Johnson, CT	To amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to encourage contributions by individuals of capital gain real property for conservation purposes, to encourage qualified conservation contributions, and to modify the rules governing the estate tax exclusion for land subject to a qualified conservation easement.
H. R. 1379	Udall, CO	To provide for a study of options for protecting the open space characteristics of certain lands in and adjacent to the Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests in Colorado, and for other purposes.
H. R. 1381	Udall, CO	To direct the Secretary of the Interior to establish the Cooperative Landscape Conservation Program.
H. R. 1711	Dunn, WA	To amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to modify the treatment of bonds issues to acquire renewable resources on land subject to conservation easement.
H. R. 1739	Udall, CO	To require the Council on Environmental Quality to conduct a study on urban sprawl and smart growth, and to ensure the consideration by Federal agencies of urban sprawl in the preparation of their environmental reviews under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969.
H. R. 1882	Udall, CO	To establish the Cultural Heritage Assistance Partnership Program in the Department of the Interior including coordinating all agency efforts.
H.R. 1938	Moran, KS	The Conservation Enhancement Act of 2000. Reauthorizes, increases funding, and amends numerous NRCS Conservation Programs.
H. R. 1949	Thune, SD	To amend the Food Security Act of 1985 and to establish the Conservation Security Program.
S. 932	Harkin, IA	To amend the Food Security Act of 1985 and to establish the Conservation Security Program.

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THIS WEEK

MEMORIAL DAY RECESS- The House is in recess from May 25 until June 4, 2001.
The Senate is in recess from May 26 until June 3, 2001.

LOOKING AHEAD

AGRICULTURE CONSERVATION PROGRAMS - The Conservation, Credit, Rural Development and Research Subcommittee (Chairman Lucas, OK) of the House Agriculture Committee will hold hearings on agricultural conservation programs.

June 6 1:00 p.m. 1300 Longworth

FISCAL 2002 AGRICULTURE APPROPRIATIONS - Subcommittee Markup - The Agriculture, Rural Development and FDA and Related Agencies Subcommittee (Chairman Bonilla, TX) of the House Appropriations Committee will mark up fiscal 2002 appropriations for programs under its jurisdiction.

June 6 Time TBA 2352-A Rayburn

AGRICULTURE CONSERVATION PROGRAMS- FIELD HEARING - Conservation, Credit, Rural Development and Research Subcommittee (Chairman Lucas, OK) of the House Agriculture Committee will hold a field hearing on agricultural conservation programs.

June 9 9:30 a.m. Memorial Student Union
Southwestern Oklahoma
State University
Weatherford, OK

FEDERAL FARM POLICY - FIELD HEARING - General Farm Commodities and Risk Management Subcommittee (Chairman Chambliss, GA) of the House Agriculture Committee will hold field hearings on federal farm policy.

June 11 9:00 a.m. Glenco, MN
June 18 3:00 p.m. Fresno, CA
June 23 9:00 a.m. Macon, GA

RURAL DEVELOPMENT - OVERSIGHT HEARING - The Conservation, Credit, Rural Development and Research Subcommittee (Chairman Lucas, OK) of the House Agriculture Committee will hold an oversight hearing on rural development programs.

June 26 1:00 p.m. 1300 Longworth
