LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY FOR:

February 21, 2000

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LAST WEEK:

PRESIDENT'S DAY RECESS – Last week, the House and Senate began a district holiday work period in honor of President's Day. The Senate will be in recess until Tuesday, February 22, 2000. The House will be in adjournment until February 29, 2000.

LEGISLATION OF NOTE -

The following bills of significance to NRCS and conservation have been introduced:

BILL	MEMBER	PURPOSE
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S. 1739	Wellstone, (MN)	Would impose a moratorium on large agribusiness mergers and establish a commission to review large agriculture mergers, concentration, and power.
S. 1925	Feinstein, (CA)	Would promote environmental restoration around the Lake Tahoe basin.
S. 2039	Hutchinson, (AR)	Would amend the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act to authorize the Secretary of Agriculture to provide emergency loans to poultry producers to rebuild chicken houses destroyed by disasters.
S. 2040	Bunning, (KY)	Would exclude the receipts and disbursements of the Abandoned Mine Reclamation Fund from the budget of the United Sates Government, and for other purposes.
H.R. 3288	Wilson, (NM)	Would authorize the acquisition of the Valles Caldera, to provide for an effective land and wildlife management program for this resource within the Department of Agriculture, and for other purposes.
H.R. 3313	Johnson, (CT)	Would amend section 119 of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act to reauthorize the program for the Long Island Sound, and for other purposes.
H.R. 3384	Barton, (TX)	Would strengthen provisions in the Energy Policy Act of 1992 with respect to the potential Climate Change.

H.R. 3388	Doolittle, (CA)	Would promote environmental restoration around
		the Lake Tahoe basin.
H.R. 3536	Franks, (NJ)	Would provide for a study regarding the potential
		health effects of ingesting and inhaling MTBE.
		Would provide for research method for the
		removal of MTBE from water supplies, and
		would require public water systems to monitor for
		the presence of MTBE in the public water
		systems.
H.R. 3609	Sandlin, (TX)	Would amend the Federal Water Pollution
		Control Act to exempt certain silviculture
		activities from permits under the national
		pollutant discharge elimination system, and other
		purposes.
H.R. 3624	English, (PA)	Would amend the Surface Mining Control Act of
		1977 to assure that the full amount deposited in
		the Abandoned Mine Reclamation Fund is spent
		for the purpose for which that Fund was
		established.
H.R. 3625	Dickey, (AR)	Would amend the Federal Water Pollution
		Control Act to exempt agricultural stormwater
		discharges and silviculture operations from
		permits under the national pollutant discharge
		elimination system, and other purposes.

THIS WEEK:

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS STAFF BRIEFING ON NRCS BUDGET - On

February 22, 2000, NRCS will provide a briefing for staff of the Agriculture, Rural Development and Related Agencies Subcommittee of the Senate Appropriations Committee. NRCS has been requested to provide a one-hour session to present the major points of the FY 2000 Budget proposal and answer questions about specific accounts and agency explanatory documents.

Feb. 22 3:00 p.m. 116 Dirksen Bldg.

SENATE TOTAL MAXIMUM DAILY LOAD HEARING - The Senate Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry (Chairman Lugar, R-Ind.) Committee will hold an oversight hearing on water quality regulations that were proposed by the Environmental Protection Agency on August 23, 1999, that would impose limits on runoff from farms and ranches.

Feb. 23 9:00 a.m. 106 Russell Bldg.

SENATE CROP INSURANCE MARKUP – The Senate Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry (Chairman Lugar, R-Ind.) Committee will hold a markup of Crop Insurance legislation. In addition, the Committee will consider a resolution approving the Bexar, Medina, Atascosa, watershed project in south Texas.

Feb. 24 9:00 a.m. 328-A Russell Bldg.

LOOKING AHEAD:

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE SENATE BUDGET HEARING - The Agriculture, Rural Development and Related Agencies Subcommittee (Chairman Cochran, R-MS) of the Senate Appropriations Committee will hold hearings on fiscal 2001 appropriations for the Department of Agriculture. The agenda is assistance to Producers and the Farm Economy. The witnesses will be August Schumacher, Jr., Under Secretary for Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services, Department of Agriculture, Keith Collins, Chief Economist, Department of Agriculture.

Feb. 29 2:00 p.m. 138 Dirksen Bldg.

WATER QUALITY RESTORATION - The Water Resources and Environment Subcommittee (Chairman Boehlert, R-NY) of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee will hold a hearing on H.R. 3313, a bill to amend section 119 of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act to reauthorize the program for Long Island Sound, and for other purposes. The Subcommittee will also focus on H.R. 2957, a bill to amend the Federal Water Pollution Control Act to authorize funding to carry out certain water quality restoration projects for Lake Pontchartrain Basin, Louisiana, and for other purposes.

Feb. 29 2:00 p.m. 2167 Rayburn Bldg.

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE APPROPRIATIONS -

The Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration and Related Agencies Subcommittee (Chairman Skeen, R-N.M.) of the House Appropriations Committee will hold hearings on fiscal 2001 appropriations for the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Mar. 2 10:00 a.m. 2362A Rayburn Bldg.

WATER CONTROL PROJECTS - The Water Resources and Environment Subcommittee (Chairman Boehlert, R-NY) of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee will hold a hearing on proposed Army Corps of Engineers waterway improvements and flood control projects.

Mar. 8 9:30 a.m. 2167 Rayburn Bldg.

FARM POLICY FIELD HEARINGS – House Agriculture Committee Chairman, Larry Combest (R-TX) and Ranking Member Charlie Stenholm (D-TX) have announced the schedule of farm policy hearings in 10 cities in regions from March through May, encouraging producers to submit detailed proposals for agriculture policy. Although each hearing may last for up to four hours, full discussion of producers' plans and Committee Members' questions will limit the number of witnesses who can testify at the hearings. Producers may be invited to offer testimony as a witness, or if not selected, producers may either submit specific views for the record, or e-mail informal comments to the Committee. To be considered as a potential witness at the hearing, producers should include information about their agricultural experience and their farming operations. The Committee will select witnesses who are qualified to provide specific testimony about federal farm policy, and answer questions posed by Agriculture Committee Members about policy alternatives.

The first three committee hearings have been scheduled for

- Monday, March 6 in Lubbock, Texas at the Civic Center Banquet Hall;
- Friday, March 17 in Memphis Tennessee at Agricenter International;
- Saturday, March 18 in Auburn, Alabama at the Auburn University Hotel and Conference Center.

Dates will also be announced soon for the following cities: Boise, Idaho; Kutztown, Pennsylvania; Peoria, Illinois, Raleigh, North Carolina; Sacramento, California; Sioux Falls, South Dakota and West Chester, Ohio. Those who are interested in testifying at the field hearings in March for Lubbock, Memphis or Auburn, must send a letter addressed to the Chief Clerk, c/o House Committee on Agriculture at 1301 Longworth Building, Washington, D.C., 20515. If contacted to testify for the hearing, producers are required under the Rules of the House of Representatives to file an affidavit disclosing the amount and source of each federal contract or grant they receive (disclosure of farm payments or USDA loans is not required). A brief biography of the witness must also be included. Also, those witnesses will need to provide 100 copies of their testimony in advance. Producers who are unable to testify at a field hearing may instead submit written testimony for the official record by May 20, 2000, but must include their name, address, phone number and 10 copies of their testimony in their letter to the Agriculture Committee's Chief Clerk.
