

LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY FOR:**February 8, 1999**

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LAST WEEK

RELEASE OF PRESIDENT'S FY'2000 BUDGET - On Monday, February 1, 1999, the President presented the administration's FY2000 budget proposal to Congress. Provisions for NRCS include a total funding level of \$680.7 million for Conservation Operations, an increase of approximately \$39 million above the FY99 appropriated level. The President's Budget directs that \$20 million be used for competitive partnership grants associated with the Clean Water Action Plan. Watershed and Flood Prevention is proposed at \$ 83.4 million; Debt for Nature is proposed at \$5 million; RC&D is proposed at \$35.265 million. The Farmland Protection is proposed by the administration to be funded from two accounts at a total of \$77.5 million; EQIP is proposed at a level of \$300 million, the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program is proposed at \$10 million, and the Conservation Farm Option is zeroed out by the budget proposal.

LEGISLATION OF NOTE-

The following bills of significance to NRCS and conservation were recently introduced:

Bill	Member	Purpose
S. 49	Stevens (AK)	Alaska Wetlands Conservation Act.
S. 321	Craig (ID)	To streamline, modernize, and enhance the authority of USDA relating to plant protection, quarantine, and other purposes.
H.R. 398	Mink (HI)	Funds a program to store rare, and endangered plants in Hawaii.

THIS WEEK

WATERSHED HEARING - On Wednesday, February 10, 1999, the House Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee on Water Resources (Chairman Sherwood Boehlert, R-NY) will meet to discuss the Administration's FY2000 budget submission and programs under the Subcommittee's jurisdiction. Specifically, the Subcommittee has requested testimony regarding the NRCS small watershed program and also updates on the aging watershed infrastructure issue. Other likely witnesses at the hearing will include the Army Corps of Engineers, EPA, and the Tennessee Valley Authority.

February 10, 1999 2:00 PM 2167 Rayburn Building

LOOKING AHEAD

HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS HEARING - The House Appropriations Committees has scheduled hearings on the Administration's FY'2000 Budget proposal relating to NRCS and Conservation programs. Key witnesses will include USDA Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment, Jim Lyons; and NRCS Chief, Pearlie Reed.

February 24, 1999 1:00pm 2362-A Rayburn Building

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS HEARING CHANGES -

The Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, and Related Agencies (Chairman Thad Cochran, R-Miss.) has changed the format for hearings on the FY 2000 Budget. In lieu of holding hearings on each mission area including statements from each agency in the Department, the panel will instead listen to testimony on four major subject areas. The Hearing topics, times, and witnesses as currently reported are as follows:

Issue	Date	Witness
Overview of USDA	February 9, 1999	Secretary Dan Glickman
Assistance to Producers and the Farm Economy	March 2, 1999	Keith Collins, Chief Economist Gus Schumacher, Under Secretary Farm and Foreign Agriculture
Food Safety	March 16, 1999	Catherine Woteki, Under Secretary for Food Safety
Nutrition and Health	March 23, 1999	Shirley Watkins, Under Secretary for Food, Nutrition, Consumer

STATE OF CONSERVATION BRIEFING - A briefing previously scheduled for January 12th regarding the state of conservation activities on private land has been re-scheduled for March 9th. The briefing will be sponsored by the Senate Agriculture Committee and open to the public and media. NRCS staff will present information about the current state of NRCS program delivery-system and conservation assistance, and will also outline key priority issues for the agency for 1999.

March 9 10:00am 328-A Russell Bldg.

SPECIAL ELECTION SET FOR LIVINGSTON SEAT -Louisiana Governor, Mike Foster, established May 1, as the date for a special election to fill the seat of Rep. Robert A. Livingston, who announced his resignation in December. Livingston represented Louisiana's 1st District for 11 terms. The deadline for candidates filing for the special election is March 19, 1999.