

**WEEKLY LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY FOR:**

**July 17, 2000**

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**LAST WEEK:**

**APPROPRIATIONS** – The House passed the FY 2001 Agriculture Appropriations bill, H.R. 4461, on Tuesday July 11<sup>th</sup>. The Senate is expected to take action on their version of the FY 2001 agriculture spending bill, S.2536, this week. It is anticipated that the Senate, in the FY 2001 appropriations bill, will address FY 2000 supplemental spending measures.

**MILITARY CONSTRUCTION** – The President signed the Military Construction spending bill, H.R. 4425, on Thursday July 13<sup>th</sup>. This bill contains some provisions for emergency supplemental budgets including funds for projects pertaining to the Los Alamos fires. The NRCS provision is \$4 million for the Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program.

The legislation also contains a rider that prevents any funds from being spent by the Environmental Protection Agency on the proposed Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDL) rule. The EPA did however release the final TMDL rule on Tuesday July 11<sup>th</sup>.

**FARM POLICY HEARING** – On July 12<sup>th</sup> the Agriculture Committee (Chairman Combest, R-TX) held a hearing to discuss agriculture and possible strategies for the 2002 Farm Bill. The witness panel was made up of four agriculture leaders; Bob Stallman, President, American Farm Bureau Federation, Leland Swenson, President National Farmers Union, Leroy Watson, Legislative Director, National Grange, and George Naylor, National Family Farm Coalition.

The discussion focused on commodity pricing and production agriculture. When asked about conservation programs and possible scenarios for conservation in the 2002 Farm Bill, the panelists agreed that existing programs were effective and valuable tools, but needed better funding. The panelists also expressed support for expanding the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) cap, but only to increase conservation, not to affect commodity prices.

**VALLES CALDERA, NEW MEXICO** – S. 1892, which authorizes the acquisition of the Valles Caldera area of central New Mexico, including the Baca Ranch, by USDA was passed by the House on Wednesday July 12<sup>th</sup>. The bill, which passed the Senate in April, is being prepared for the President's signature. The bill would require a large-scale land use and conservation plan by an USDA agency. The bill also designates lands within the Valles Caldera as an area of critical environmental concern, a national conservation area, and a national riparian conservation area.

**IMPACT OF BANNING METHYL BROMIDE** - The Agriculture Livestock and Horticulture Subcommittee (Chairman Pombo (R-CA) of the House Agriculture Committee held a hearing regarding the impact to agriculture when methyl bromide is banned over the next five years as required by the Montreal Clean Air Treaty. Testimony came from several growers and researchers. The testimony focused on the lack of alternative treatments to methyl bromide to control pathogens, weeds, and pests. The impact would be greatest to strawberries, tomatoes, walnuts, and corn processors. Crop losses are estimated to be 10-30% and economic losses to be \$500,000,000 annually unless new alternative treatments are developed. Scientists strongly agreed that five years was too soon to expect alternative treatments to be developed.

**H.R. 8 ESTATE TAX ELIMINATION ACT OF 2000** - The Senate passed H.R. 8 (59-39) on Friday July 14<sup>th</sup>. The bill passed by a wide majority (279-136) in the House on June 9, 2000. The bill that eliminates the tax on estates over a 10-year period will now be prepared for the President's signature. There is speculation that the President will veto the bill.

**LEGISLATION OF NOTE** – The NRCS Legislative Affairs staff identifies and tracks legislation of particular interest to NRCS and conservation. This information is available on the NRCS Legislative Affairs web-site under the heading LEGISLATION OF NOTE. The address for the Legislative Affairs web-site is as follows:

<http://www.nhq.nrcs.usda.gov/LA/LAhome.html>

**NEW LEGISLATION -**

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

<b>BILL</b>	<b>MEMBER</b>	<b>PURPOSE</b>
S. 2818	Johnson (SD)	Establishes a flexible fallow program for producers to idle land in exchange for higher loan rates on remaining acreage.
S. 2797	Smith (NH)	To authorize a comprehensive Everglades restoration plan.
S. 2796	Voinovich (OH)	To provide for the conservation and development of water and related resources, to authorize the Secretary of the Army to construct various projects for improvements to rivers and harbors of the United States.
S. 2741	Johnson (SD)	Amends the Agriculture Credit Act of 1987 to extend the authority of the Secretary of Agriculture to provide grants for State mediation programs dealing with agriculture issues. (WRP, CRP)
S. 2736	Domenici (NM)	To provide compensation for the victims of the fire at Bandelier National Monument, New Mexico.

**THIS WEEK:**

**APPROPRIATIONS** – It is expected that the Senate will consider the FY 2001 Agriculture Appropriations bill (S. 2536)

**CONSERVATION AND REINVESTMENT ACT (CARA)** – The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee (Chairman Murkowski, R-Alaska) will mark up legislation that would allocate part of the royalties from offshore drilling to conservation activities instead of continuing to send them to the Federal Treasury for general use. The Committee is scheduled to mark up the following legislation: S. 2123, H.R. 701, and S. 25. The House passed H.R. 701 on May 18<sup>th</sup>.

July 18<sup>th</sup>&19<sup>th</sup>                    9:30am                    366 Dirksen Bldg.

This markup was scheduled for June 14<sup>th</sup>, re-scheduled for June 21<sup>st</sup>, rescheduled to June 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>, and postponed to July 18<sup>th</sup>&19<sup>th</sup>.

**AGRICULTURE EXPORT PROGRAMS** – Production and Price Competitiveness Subcommittee (Chairman Roberts, R-KS) of the Senate Agriculture Committee will hold a hearing on the future of U.S. agriculture export programs.

July 18<sup>th</sup>                            2:30pm                    328A Russell Bldg.

**HOUSE FARM POLICY HEARING SERIES** – The House Agriculture Committee (Chairman Combest, R-TX) will hold a series of hearings on Federal farm policy.

July 19<sup>th</sup>                            10:00am                    1300 Longworth Bldg.

**ENERGY COST AND AGRICULTURE** – Senate Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Committee (Chairman Lugar, R-IN) will hold a hearing on the impact of high energy prices on domestic agriculture.

July 20<sup>th</sup>                            9:00am                    328A Russell Bldg.

**LOS ALAMOS FIRE** – Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee (Chairman Murkowski, R-AK) will hold an oversight hearing on the investigation of the Cerro Grande Fire in New Mexico. The hearing will also focus on Federal fire policies in general.

July 20<sup>th</sup>                            9:30am                    366 Dirksen Bldg.

**INCREASED PROTECTION FOR NATIONAL FOREST LAND** – The Senate Forests and Public Land Management Subcommittee (Chairman Craig, R-Idaho) of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee will hold a hearing on the draft environmental impact statement related to increased protection for 40 million acres of national forest lands.

July 21<sup>st</sup>                            9:30am                    366 Dirksen Bldg.

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**LOOKING AHEAD:**

**LAND CONSERVATION TAX ISSUES** – Taxation and IRS Oversight Subcommittee (Chairman Hatch, R-UT) of the Senate Finance Committee will hold a hearing on federal income tax issues relating to various legislative proposals to encourage the creation of public open spaces in urban areas and the preservation of farm and other natural rural lands for conservation purposes.

July 25<sup>th</sup>                      10:00am              215 Dirksen Bldg.

**HOUSE FARM POLICY HEARING SERIES** – The House Agriculture Committee (Chairman Combest, R-TX) will hold a series of hearings on Federal farm policy.

July 26                      10:00am              1300 Longworth Bldg.

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