LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY FOR:

June 14, 1999

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LAST WEEK -

FISCAL YEAR 2000 AGRICULTURE APPROPRIATIONS BILL PASSES

HOUSE - On Tuesday evening, the House passed H.R. 1906, legislation making Fiscal Year 2000 appropriations for agriculture programs and agencies by a vote of 246-183. A long string of amendments by Rep. Tom Coburn (R-OK) ended after House Appropriations chair, C.W."Bill" Young (R-FL) passed an amendment which reduced agriculture department funding by \$102.5 million. Most of these reductions came from USDA buildings and facilities funds and funding for the Food and Drug Administration. The amendment was brokered by the House leadership as a way to squelch opposition by fiscal conservatives to discretionary spending above and beyond the balanced budget agreement of 1997. Funding levels for the Natural Resources Conservation Service were unchanged from the mark-up levels set at the Subcommittee level. They are as follows:

Conservation Operations	.\$654,243,000	
Watershed Surveys and Planning	\$10,368,000	
Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations	\$99,443,000	
RC&D	\$35,265,000	
Forestry Incentives Program (FIP)	\$0	
Farmland Protection Program	\$0	
Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)\$174,000,000		

WETLANDS RESERVE REAUTHORIZATION LEGISLATION - On Tuesday, June 8, 1999, Representative Charles "Chip" Pickering of Mississippi introduced H.R. 2066, legislation that would amend the Food Security Act of 1985 to extend the authorization of the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) until the year 2005. Specifically, the bill would authorize annual enrollment of 250,000 acres in the program. The legislation would also provide greater flexibility for utilizing third-party assistance in program implementation through cooperative agreements. The bill has been referred to the House Agriculture Committee.

LEGISLATION OF NOTE -

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

BILL	MEMBER	PURPOSE
S. 968	Graham, (FL)	Would authorize the Administrator of the Environment Protection Agency to make grants to state agencies with responsibility for water source development, for the purposes of maximizing the available water supply and protecting the environment through the development of alternative water sources.
H.R. 1909	Andrews, (NJ)	Would make supplemental appropriations for fiscal year 1999 to ensure the inclusion of commonly used pesticides in state source water assessment programs.
H.R. 1950	Farr, (CA)	Would amend the Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996 to extend authorization of the farmland protection program.
H.R. 1983	Clayton, (NC)	Would amend the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act to improve the agricultural credit programs of the Department of Agriculture.
H.R. 2066	Chambliss, (GA)	Would amend the Food Security Act of 1985 to authorize the annual enrollment of land in the wetlands reserve program and to extend the program through 2005.

THIS WEEK

SENATE SUBCOMMITTEE MARKUP OF FY 2000 APPROPRIATIONS -

The Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development and Related Agencies (Chairman Cochran, R-MS) is scheduled to markup FY 2000 funding levels for USDA programs and agencies on Tuesday, June 15. The Senate Appropriations Committee has tentatively scheduled a full committee markup for Thursday, June 17.

ELECTRONIC ACCESS TO AGRICULTURE DEPARTMENT DATA -

Department Operations, Oversight, Nutrition and Forestry Subcommittee (Chairman Goodlatte, R-VA) of the House Agriculture Committee will hold a hearing on H.R. 852, a bill to require the Department of Agriculture to establish an electronic filing and retrieval system to enable the public to file all required paperwork electronically with the department and to have access to public information on farm programs, quarterly trade, economic, and production reports. The witness list has not been completed at this time.

June 17

10:00 am

1300 Longworth Bldg.

CONSERVATION AND RESOURCE HEARING - The House Resources Committee (Chairman Young, R-Alaska) will hold a hearing on pending legislation Saturday, June 12, 1999, in Salt Lake City, Utah. The bill, H.R. 701, would amend the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965, the Urban Park and Recreation Recovery Act of 1978, and the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act (commonly referred to as the Pittman Robertson Act). The bill would establish the use of fees from off shore drilling to state and local governments. The fees collected would be used to meet the outdoor conservation and recreation needs such as urban parks and preservation of open space. Witnesses scheduled include: Gregory S. Bell, Mayor, Farmington City, Utah; Kathleen Clarke, Executive Director, Utah Department of Natural Resources, Don Peay, Executive Director of Sportsmen for Fish and Wildlife and others representing public and private recreation and outdoor interest.

June 12 11:00 a.m.

State Capitol Auditorium

LOOKING AHEAD

NOXIOUS WEEDS AND INVASIVE PLANTS - National Parks and Public Lands Subcommittee (Chairman Hansen, R-Utah) of House Resources Committee will hold a hearing on noxious weeds and invasive plants. The main focus of the hearing will be the problems of noxious weeds on public and private lands.

 June 24
 10:00 am
 1324 Longworth Bldg.