

LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY FOR:**November 6, 2000**

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LAST WEEK

PRESIDENT SIGNS AGRICULTURE APPROPRIATIONS – On Saturday, October 28, 2000 the President signed H.R. 4461, legislation making appropriations for the Department of Agriculture for Fiscal Year 2001. As a result, USDA is no longer operating under continuing resolutions. Details of the spending bill were included in the October 16, Weekly Legislative Summary.

CONGRESS PASSES 14-DAY CONTINUING RESOLUTION – With negotiations stymied on final pending appropriations bills for FY 2001, The House cleared a 14-day Continuing Resolution for the President's signature on November 3, 2000. The resolution will allow Members to remain in their Congressional Districts until after the Election.

CONSERVATION SECURITY ACT REINTRODUCED- On October 27, 2000, the Conservation Security Act of 2000, S. 3223 was re-introduced as S. 3260 by Sen. Tom Harkin (D-IA) and Gordon Smith (R-OR) along with 5 Senate co-sponsors. The bill amends the Food and Security Act of 1985 to establish a voluntary program of incentive payments to every agricultural producer that applies conservation practices.

The bill establishes a three tiered system of annual payments ranging from \$20,000 to \$50,000 for producers that implement Conservation Security Plans. Tier I provides incentives for a producer to establish basic conservation practices. Tier II would address priority concerns and Tier III would address all resource concerns of the entire agricultural operation.

Conservation Security Contracts would become the vehicle for the program. Contracts would be a minimum of 5 years for Tier I and 5-10 years for Tiers II and III at the option of the operator. The priorities factors include environmental benefits, extent of maintenance for practices, income loss to producers, value for carbon sequestration, importance to local and state conservation needs, cost of monitoring results, participation in watershed efforts, and other factors. Waste storage or treatment facilities are excluded from the program.

WATER RESOURCES CONFERENCE REPORT – On November 11, 2000 the House approved the Conference Report for the Water Resources and Development Act of 2000. The bill would establish a number of new authorizations. Included in the Conference Report are a number of initiatives through the Army Corps of Engineers that involve USDA programs. These include:

- A cooperative sediment and nutrient study of the Upper Mississippi River in conjunction with Department of the Interior.
- Everglades restoration that enables specific USDA conservation program payments from CREP and WRP to be considered part of local cost share requirements.
- Establishment of a Missouri River Task force that includes USDA representation.
- Study of the land conservation in the Highlands region of NJ to prevent flooding.
- A comprehensive Illinois River Restoration plan which integrates CRP, CREP and the National Buffer Initiative.
- An Upper Mohawk River Basin project in NY to reduce flooding and create wild life habitat through wetlands restoration and soil and water conservation practices.

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THIS WEEK

NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT BRIEFING - Tom Christensen, Director, Animal Husbandry and Clean Water Programs, and Obie Ashford, National Leader for Animal Husbandry will brief the Senate Agriculture committee staff on Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans Technical Guidance (CNMP) on November 9. A similar session was held for the House Agriculture Committee in October.

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LOOKING AHEAD –

CONGRESS TO RECONVENE IN POST-ELECTION SESSION – In order to complete spending bills and other pending business before adjourning the 106th Congress, the House will reconvene at 2 p.m. on November 13, 2000. The Senate will reconvene at noon on November 14, 2000.

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