

COMMON PURPOSE, COMMON GOALS

Co-workers, guests, and friends: Welcome all to the annual National Soil Conservation Service Conference.

Any attempt to deliver a full-scale address on soil and water conservation analogous to the "State of the Union" runs the risk of turning into a simplistic account of "what is wrong in America and how to set it right."

The challenges that face SCS are as broad and complex as the American landscape. It is impossible not to be reminded of the old story of the blind men who were asked to describe an elephant after each was allowed to feel only one part of the animal's anatomy.

Too many people--including those who try to solve every problem by calling for overnight changes in SCS policies, programs, budget, and even leadership -- have identified only the trunk, the tail, the leg, or the rump of the soil and water conservation movement. Too few have that broad perspective that incorporates the parts of the movement into a coherent whole.

Some of those who do see the whole picture lack the energy or the courage to act. Perhaps they are put off by the size of the task or intimidated by the advocates for a single issue or the supporters of a status quo already overtaken by events. What we need today is SCS leadership with the vision, the energy, and the dedication to move our programs forward into the "Action Eighties" with courage and enthusiasm. By the end of this week, I hope we can all see more clearly how our individual efforts can contribute to the improvement of the total program. I want all of us to have a grasp for more than the trunk and the tail.

To help us do that, we have invited a number of speakers to this Conference from outside SCS, recognizing that to many, the goals and operations of other agencies--including those inside USDA--are vague and mysterious, even alien. But the professional public manager today cannot afford to be provincial about his own organizational unit; he needs to work closely with other professional managers across organizational lines and understand their points of view. We can all benefit by building on common goals, better communications, and mutual support for one another.

Besides improving relations with other Federal agencies, another top priority is to build cooperation with a broad spectrum of non-Federal organizations--with interest groups representing agriculture, conservation, the environment, and local and state governments.

As a start in this direction, we are proud to have as speakers on our program this week Lyle Bauer and Neil Sampson of NACD; Leonard Solomon, president of the Association of State Soil Conservation Administrative Officers;

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and the agency heads of the U.S. Forest Service, Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service, and the Science and Education Administration--
Max Peterson, Ray Fitzgerald, and Anson Bertrand.

Many interagency problems can be resolved quickly when informed managers develop the habit of working easily with one another. Our mutual clients--the people we serve--expect us to provide them with intelligent service and assistance, and not to compound their confusion. I hope that we can have full and open discussions of our mutual problems and personal confusions this week, possibly clear up any misunderstandings, and gain a better understanding of each other's mission and operations.

Called for Suggestions

On September 17, 1979, less than a week after I began my present assignment, I met with you, and, instead of delivering a traditional annual message, I asked for your opinions on charting the agency's future. I wanted your ideas for goals and directions in the decade just ahead. Four State Conservationists who represented you--Francis Lum, Craig Right, Whitey Spears and Bob Swenson -- responded with a paper called Looking Ahead to the 1980's that included 19 different concerns. Topics ranged from preserving prime farmland to ensuring equal opportunity in hiring. Each has been studied in depth by my National Office staff. We'll report on our reactions and decisions this week.

I also made it clear that I wanted the advice, recommendations, and opinions of every SCS employee, saying that "I can't accomplish my job without a great deal of help." I asked for answers to the question: "What would you do as Administrator to prepare SCS most effectively for the demands of the next decade?"

Candid and constructive comments came to me from every corner of the land. Your ideas, and those of hundreds of others, helped shape our program today. Thanks to each of you for your thoughtful responses.

You also asked for more of my own thinking. In 1980, you said, "Return to an Annual Message at the beginning of the National Conference." So be it!

New STC's Selected

First, however, I would like to welcome those who were not yet State Conservationists when we met in Florida a year ago. They are:

Manly Wilder, Virginia
Mike Nethery, North Dakota
Paul Dodd, New York
Sherman Lewis, Massachusetts
Sheldon Boone, Colorado
Ray Margo, New Mexico
Dick Porter, New Hampshire
Gene Sullivan, Nebraska
Cliff Maguire, Wisconsin, and
Bob Eddleman, Indiana

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Congratulations and best wishes to each of you.

Altogether, one in five State Conservationists are new to their positions in 1980. You may be interested in a composite profile of the SCS State Conservationist today, a picture that emerges when you feed our personnel data to a computer.

The typical State Conservationist today is a 50-year-old male, a career employee with nearly 28 years of experience with the Service. He has completed 4-1/2 years of college (23 have Master's degrees), and has worked in more than three different States. Despite the 10 newcomers to STC jobs, the typical State Conservationist has been in his job for a little over 5 years.

Here are a few more facts about our current State leadership. State Conservationists come from all over the Nation, but 8 started their SCS careers in Texas; 3 started in Indiana, 3 in Montana, and 3 in Tennessee. Only 3 have worked in TSC's, but 9 have had experience in the National Office. Most significant, 10 are eligible to retire today; 20 will be eligible by the end of calendar 1981, and 30--about 3 in 5 of you--will be eligible to retire by December 31, 1985.

As you know, there have been other organizational changes. We knew that we needed a more effective leadership structure in the National Office, and we set about promptly to bring it into being. On February 7, 1980, we had USDA approval for our reorganization, and by May 4, 1980, we had made the change.

In implementing the change, we carried on an open search for the best people we could interest in applying. As a result, while many familiar faces were assigned to new positions, we also were able to bring in some new faces, talents, and experience.

The restructuring removed one level of decisionmaking to streamline action and gave key positions additional visibility. It also included establishment of 5 Assistant Chief positions and 4 separate TSC directors. This is very important. A primary purpose of the reorganization was to make your National Office more responsive to the needs of State and field offices, as well as to bring about more effective and efficient internal operations.

Let me show you where assignments and responsibilities now rest.

Holding down the fort in the National Office this week of September 22 are the following:

Deputy Chief for Administration - Verne Bathurst
Deputy Chief for Natural Resource Assessments - William M. Johnson

Directors of the Staffs for:

Administrative Support - Pearlle Reed
Legislative Affairs - Jim Olson
Information and Public Affairs - Hubert Kelley

Administrative Services - Linc Gallacher
Management Services - Wayne Maresch
Ecological Sciences - Tom Shiflet
Economics - Mack Gray
Engineering - Neil Bogner
Integrated Resource Information Systems - George Bluhm
Cartography and Remote Sensing - Jerry Gockowski

I wish they could all be here, but what they do this week in Washington is important, too.

Let me introduce those National Office people who are here in Rapid City:

Associate Chief - Dave Unger

Assistant Chiefs:

Northwest - Galen Bridge
Southwest - Dan Holmes
Midwest - Benny Martin
Northeast - Rich Duesterhaus
Southeast - Ed Thomas

Director of Equal Opportunity - Dave Montoya
Public Participation Coordinator - Ida Cuthbertson
Environmental Coordinator - Gary Margheim

Deputy Chief-State and Local Operations - Clete Gillman
Associate Deputy Chief-State and Local Operations - Bob Halstead
Director, Conservation Planning & Application - Jerry Hytry
Director, Land Treatment Programs - Dennie Burns
Director, Rural Development - Bill Parker
Director, Land Use - Howard Tankersley

Deputy Chief-Natural Resource Projects - Joe Haas
Associate Deputy Chief-Natural Resource Projects - Jim Mitchell
Director, Basin and Area Planning - Ed Nelson
Director, Project Development and Maintenance - Buell Ferguson

Deputy Chief-Technology Development and Application - Paul Howard
Associate Deputy Chief-Technology Development and Application - Glen Loomis
Director, International Activities - Jerry Hammond
Director, Social Sciences - Arun Basu

Associate Deputy Chief-Natural Resource Assessments - Klaus Flach
Director, Soils - Richard Arnold
Director, Inventory and Monitoring - Jerry Lee

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Deputy Chief-Planning and Evaluation - Ken Williams
 Associate Deputy Chief-Planning and Evaluation - Ernie Todd
 Director, Appraisal and Program Development - Peter Tidd
 Director, Evaluation and Analysis - Bob Caldwell
 Director, Budget Formulation - Bill Gardner
 Director, Program Integration - John Peterson

Director, Personnel - Ken Novak
 Director, Financial Management - Paul Newcombe

Ken Novak has a handout showing where everyone fits in and room and phone numbers. To get a better understanding of how these various staffs operate, my top staff and I are holding meetings with each Staff Director to learn all we can about current operations, problems, and objectives.

Two other composite SCS profiles that may be of interest are those of a Senior Executive Service member and a National Office Staff Director. Like the State Conservationist, the typical Senior Executive is 50 years old with 25 years' experience with the Service; the director is 45, with 20 years' experience. Both have completed an average of 5 years of college.

Of the Senior Executives, 13 have Master's degrees and 3 are Ph.D's. Of the Staff Directors, 5 have Master's and 8 are Ph.D's. Looking back at their careers in the Service, 13 of the Senior Executives are former State Conservationists, but compared with only 3 of the directors. Seven directors began their SCS careers in Washington, D.C. Like the State Conservationists, however, both groups come from all over the Nation.

Five Senior Executives are eligible to retire now, 7 will be eligible by December 31, 1981, and 10 by the end of 1985.

In the Staff Director ranks, 2 are eligible for retirement now, 3 by the end of 1981, and 7 by the end of 1985.

Now it is my pleasure to introduce the new directors of the four Technical Service Centers:

Northeast--Homer Hilner
 Midwest--Eugene Pope
 South--Billy Johnson
 West--Chuck Lemon

Following our National Office reorganization, I asked the Assistant Chiefs to look at the role of the Technical Service Centers and to make a preliminary report by January 1, 1981. This study is being carried on with full participation of all concerned and will help us further improve our operations.

Now, I would like to introduce the four District Conservationists who are with us:

Warren Archibald, Lancaster, Pennsylvania
 Charles Adams, Edinburg, Texas
 C. Merle Laywer, Harlan, Iowa

Joan Perry, Hillsboro, Oregon

We also are happy to welcome Obie Ashford, Area Conservationist from Albany, Georgia.

Learning About the SES

Our organizational arrangements and operating procedures, of course, are being carried out in the context of the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978, which created the Senior Executive Service and the Merit Pay System as a whole. During the first year of the Senior Executive Service, we have been part of the "shakedown" period, a learning process. While all of the problems have not been worked out, the process should work much more smoothly this year, as USDA agencies, the Department, and the Office of Personnel Management gain additional experience.

The Soil Conservation Service is in large part an organization of professionals, and it is up to all of us to support fully the Civil Service reform, including the SES and the Merit Pay System.

I plan to use part of a 1-day session with STC's at the NACD Convention in February to provide training in the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978.

This Act is founded on the principle that employees should be compensated according to their performance. The 8,500 men and women of the Senior Executive Service are the key to making that principle work. For my part, I expect to reward those exhibiting superior service within the Senior Executive Service by recommending bonuses and other forms of recognition for those who qualify.

Career Senior Executive Service members whose performance is exceptional for an extended period may be granted one of two Presidential Ranks. In addition, the "SESers" are eligible for annual performance awards, including a substantial lump sum payment for outstanding achievement. This Act also establishes merit pay for managers in Grades GS 13, 14, and 15, effective October 1, 1980.

The Act also restructures the hiring, promotion, and dismissal of senior executives. However, the SES has been embraced by an overwhelming majority of those eligible to join, who have traded a certain amount of security for flexibility and the knowledge that excellent work will be rewarded.

Realistically, you and I know that circumstances still hamper the Senior Executive Service, such as salary levels and restrictions on bonuses. Nevertheless, it is a signal opportunity to serve as a senior executive, to contribute to better government, and to increase the level of trust among elected officials, political appointees, and career employees. I now have additional Senior Executive Service positions for SCS. I will ask, when timely, for even more slots, especially for field-based positions.

I also will encourage you and others to consider the opportunities in the SES and to make application when vacancies occur that require your skills. Some of you may be asked to apply for a position to assure a good pool of eligibles. Such a request, however, should not be considered as preselection of a

candidate. Only people who actually apply for positions will be considered after October 1, 1980, since there will be no management referrals.

There is renewed emphasis under the Merit Pay System on the annual performance appraisal in determining awards, within-grade increases, promotions, training, reductions-in-force, removals for unacceptable performance, and reassignments. Because of this, it is important that all employees have well-developed, well-written, and well-understood performance standards, and it is the supervisor's responsibility to make sure that they have them.

Closing Out Multiple Appraisals

Beginning October 1, we will no longer use the multiple appraisal process in our merit promotion program. Vacancy announcements will be required for all competitive promotions, including State Conservationist positions.

We also will be changing the way some positions are classified. For example, State Conservationist and Deputy State Conservationist positions, as well as staff positions in the National Office and TSC's, may be filled from the general agriculture and biological science series. This will enable more employees to qualify for such positions, including more women and minorities. I will have more to say later about these two categories of employees.

In addition, we hope to revise the classification and qualification standards for both soil conservationist and soil conservation technician series in an effort to combine them. All such employees would then be "soil conservationists."

This would provide greater opportunities for technicians to elevate their status within the organization, something that is long overdue. Such an employee could then rise to a level commensurate with her or his ability, experience, and education. . .and the opportunities available.

There will be other equally important changes in personnel, such as the implementation of our Executive Development Program and the reevaluation of our process for taking adverse actions and processing disciplinary and grievance cases.

As you can see, changes have been made--and some are still to be made--and change is often worrisome. But these changes are necessary if we are going to remain a hard-driving and progressive agency. . .an agency capable of carrying out the demands already here and coming in the future.

Employees Are Vital

It will take the efforts, not only of you men and women here, but of each Service employee to carry out our mission. It makes no difference whether a job is in engineering or in contracting, in secretarial work or in soils, in personnel classification or in agronomy--each job effectively done is necessary for our agency to function properly.

Many of us chose careers in public service because we believe in the capacity of government to make this a better world. As we care about the

success of government, we must work together on the problems of serving the public well.

Career people can make significant contributions to good government. For example, I inherited some decisions made earlier that are troublesome to SCS and to the cause of soil and water conservation. I have led the effort to identify and advocate alternatives to those decisions. For example--

. Phasing out RC&D's. We have proposed a redesigned program fully utilizing the USDA Task Force recommendations and emphasizing the strengths of RC&D in building rural leadership, addressing national resource concerns on a multi-county basis, and serving as a catalyst for action. I have approved several new RC&D coordinator positions.

. Nonfederal control of the Snow Survey and Plant Materials Centers. We have proposed full utilization of capabilities of these programs under the continued leadership of SCS. The careful studies and public participation activities which you helped conduct have been most useful in this connection.

. Reduction of Watershed Planning and Construction Dollars. We have taken the offensive in demonstrating that more planning rather than less is needed for a balanced, continuing program. Our National Resources Project staff will be illustrating this in later discussions at this meeting.

. Reluctance to extend GPCP for a decade. Here we have been successful, with the help of supporters of the Great Plains program throughout the countryside. Passage of P.L. 96-263 extended GPCP through 1991.

Money Management Needed

We all make a significant contribution by managing those public funds entrusted to us more efficiently--and creatively. Let's take a look at what is ahead for funding for the Soil Conservation Service.

More and more emphasis today is being placed on program outputs--what the public is getting for the dollars spent. The zero-based budgeting process requires justifying our programs from the bottom up and competing directly with other USDA programs for funds.

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For the past several years, we have been realizing only modest increases, if any, in funding for conservation programs--not enough to provide a "real growth" program level or to keep up with the impact of inflation. Employment levels have also been declining. Unless this trend is reversed, we have a monumental challenge to get the job done with too few resources.

In his talk to you last year in Lake Buena Vista, NACD President Lyle Bauer commended you for the fine jobs you've been doing in the face of these money and manpower cuts. I share his sentiments entirely. We must keep up the good work. Only by working together and sharing ideas and concerns can we succeed.

To give you an idea of where we are, I'd like to review briefly the final 1980 appropriation and the 1981 budget request that is still not law.

Total SCS appropriations for 1980 were about \$515 million, plus a \$23 million supplemental earmarked for the Mount St. Helens disaster. We were required to absorb over 60 percent of the cost of the 1979 pay raise and for the first time a rescission of appropriated funds.

Last January, the President requested approximately \$535 million for the 1981 SCS budget. This was later revised downward to roughly \$491 million in an effort to curb inflation. At this time, only the House has completed action on the 1981 appropriations bill. The proposed House funding level for SCS is about \$533 million.

Our budget request for FY 1982 is now ready for Office of Management and Budget decisions. While I can't discuss the details, I can tell you that I don't anticipate any substantial changes in total funding levels from previous years. However, you can expect to see changes in program priorities to reflect RCA findings.

As for employment, our 1980 ceiling for permanent full-time (PFT) employees is still 13,650, but the 4 out of 10 hiring limitation will put us around 13,350 as we begin Fiscal Year 1981. The FY 1981 budget would reduce this to 13,190, and in the development of the 1982 budget, we were encouraged to hold requests for additional PFT employees to a minimum.

It is essential that we manage available funds and personnel with the greatest possible efficiency. Beginning October 1, I will initiate a one-year test of the Soil Conservation Service Financial Management System. The 1981 allotment system will make the Chief the sole allottee for the Service. The

State Conservationists, Director-Caribbean Area, Directors-Technical Service Centers, and the Associate Chief will be designated as allowance holders. As allowance holders, you will not be subject to the Anti-deficiency Act, but will be subject to performance standards.

Our goal is to utilize fully the monetary resources available to SCS to accomplish maximum conservation objectives. We also plan to automate the fund control system and to develop a redesigned financial management system to be implemented over the next 2 or 3 years.

Responses to RCA

For more than 2 years, many in SCS have been involved in meeting the challenges of the Soil and Water Resources Conservation Act of 1977. We have put in countless hours, and, before the 1985 effort is completed, we will undoubtedly put in many more.

I have written the State Conservationists a letter expressing my appreciation for their efforts in behalf of RCA, but I want to thank you in person, particularly for your public participation efforts during the last 2 years and for providing personnel for the Response Analysis Center.

I am also grateful to those members of your staff who did double duty on their jobs while their associates were on RCA details.

The fresh ideas and new directions developed through RCA have altered the thinking of many SCS employees. Our 1982 budget request reflects some of this thinking in its references to a number of the resource areas and alternative strategies developed in the 1980 RCA process. These include:

- . Targeting our resources to reduce erosion in critically eroding areas and on fragile soils;
- . Improving water quality and water conservation;
- . Developing more nonstructural alternatives to reduce upstream flood damages;
- . Preserving wetlands and wildlife habitat; and
- . Conserving energy.

One of the most positive things that has happened as a result of RCA has been an expanded role for States, Technical Service Centers, and districts. And the program will rely on these organizations even more in the future. They will participate heavily in program evaluation and analysis and many other activities.

As you know, the 1980 RCA process unearthed an amazing amount of data--facts and figures about every aspect of our Nation's soil, water, and related resources. Those of you who examined the draft appraisals, program report, environmental impact statement, and summary issued last January can testify to that.

All this information was open to public scrutiny and comment. We held more than 9,000 local and 18 regional public meetings. We set up a Response Analysis Center in Athens, Georgia, to handle the 65,000 written responses received

during the January 28-to-March 28 public review period. These responses, which came from every State and the Caribbean Area, contained more than 118,000 signatures and 1.5 million comments.

RCA Responses Analyzed

Analysis of these responses showed that--

- . almost three-fourths were from individuals;
- . nearly half of the individuals did not identify themselves by occupation or affiliation;
- . nearly one-fourth were from those who identified themselves as farmers or ranchers;
- . one-fourth were from respondents who were employees of Federal, State, or local governments;
- . well over half were structured response forms;
- . many different structured response forms were used;
- . about half of all comments addressed the alternative strategies for conserving soil and water resources;
- . more than one-third of all comments addressed the conservation objectives; and
- . the remaining comments addressed present programs, conservation activities, RCA assumptions and projects, USDA agencies, soil and water resources, and several miscellaneous topics--some not relevant to RCA.

An evaluation team formed in Washington prepared a report of the comments. These are some of the highlights:

Those commenting on soil, water, and related resources--

- . valued highly their Nation's soil, water, and related resources;
- . were concerned about the capacity of the Nation's resources to meet future needs; and
- . were troubled by the definition of wetlands.

Respondents commenting on the conservation objectives--

- . viewed the proposed objectives as important issues in developing a national conservation program;
- . supported the objectives to reduce soil erosion and retain prime farmland more than all other objectives;
- . supported energy conservation; and
- . expressed the least support for the objective to reduce loss of wetlands and the objectives associated with irrigation water use.

Those commenting on the activities to reach the objectives--

- . said by a 3 to 2 margin that activities for achieving conservation objectives were adequate rather than inadequate;
- . most frequently said that erosion control measures, structural flood control measures, conservation tillage, and drainage were effective conservation measures;

- . supported incentives for solving soil and water resource problems, and advocated a conservationist philosophy, research and education, and technical assistance as solutions to those problems;
- . acknowledged farmers' commitment to a conservation ethic.

Persons commenting on USDA agencies and their conservation programs--

- . generally believed that the programs were effective but said that the agencies could do an even better job if they had more funding, if they could provide more technical assistance, and if they were more efficient;
- . said that education and research--but not regulation--are appropriate areas for government involvement in conservation activities; and
- . wanted red tape and regulations reduced.

Those commenting on related agricultural issues--

- . favored a strong export policy and related this to energy needs;
- . endorsed the traditional American concept of small family farms; and
- . supported retention of farmland for agricultural use.

Strategies Considered

Most of the respondents favored the alternative strategy calling for redirection of the Department's existing conservation programs.

The second most preferred strategy would provide bonuses to land users who voluntarily apply and maintain conservation measures that meet USDA standards.

In third place: Setting up natural resource contracts whereby the Federal Government would offer to purchase outputs of conservation from farmers.

Fourth place: Focusing Federal, State, and local funds on solving regional resource problems.

Fifth place: Requiring farmers to apply certain conservation measures to their land to qualify for benefits of commodity price support programs, low-interest loans, cost-sharing programs, and crop insurance. This was known as the cross-compliance option.

Sixth place: Encouraging States to assume leadership for planning and implementing soil and water conservation programs, with grants from the Federal Government to cover some of the costs.

And in last place: Using backup regulatory authorities at the Federal, State, and local levels to carry out a national soil and water conservation program.

The most popular alternative strategy--redirecting the present conservation programs--and the least popular--regulation--appeared to be two extremes in a range of alternatives. Actually, they were not. The real extremes were not even proposed as alternative strategies, because neither seemed feasible to the RCA Coordinating Committee.

One extreme would be a situation where the Federal Government assumed full financial responsibility for protecting the Nation's natural resources, while farmers, ranchers, and foresters continued to have broad discretion over how they use their land.

The other would be a situation where laws were passed providing severe penalties for those who fail to manage natural resources in the best interests of society.

As a practical matter, available choices still fall between these two extremes.

We did not solicit views on "doing nothing."

The thousands of concerned citizens who took the time to respond to the RCA effort are most interested in programs for erosion control, prime farmland retention, conservation tillage, and drainage. They are least interested in programs for wetlands retention and data collection.

The respondents generally agree with the Department's appraisal of our country's natural resources. They say that erosion reduction should be the primary objective of USDA and that increased emphasis should be placed on water quality and energy conservation as well.

The respondents want more technical assistance for on-the-ground implementation, more funding, and less regulation and red tape. They also recommend better communication and coordination among the Department's conservation agencies.

What these comments boil down to is widespread support for a voluntary, locally-controlled, but Government-subsidized program. Whether or not this is the program that emerges remains to be seen. But decisionmakers are taking the public's comments into consideration in developing the final program.

Another Public Review

The recommended USDA program should go forward to the President and the Congress during the first half of 1981. Before that happens, though, there will be another 60-day public review period.

As you can see, the process is slower than we had planned. We must complete our work on the 1980 process. Congress and the public are concerned and pressure is building to expedite sending the final appraisal and program to Congress.

Meanwhile, several bills have been introduced in Congress that relate to RCA. Proposals would authorize:

The Federal Government to develop long-term conservation partnership contracts with farmers in parts of the country with especially chronic or severe soil erosion problems. This is similar to RCA's regional resource contracts alternative strategy.

Financial and technical assistance to those geographic areas which have particularly bad soil erosion, erosion-related, or irrigation water management problems.

Incentives to landowners who install and maintain conservation measures on their land and a pilot program to test the purchase of conservation benefits from landowners. This proposal combines two RCA alternative strategies--conservation bonuses and natural resource contracts.

You can see that many of the ideas developed in the RCA process are already firing the imagination of lawmakers and others.

Such basic questions are being explored as: What is the impact of erosion on yields and ultimately on our ability to produce food and fiber? What is the appropriate share of the total conservation cost that should be borne by the public versus that of the land user? What is the direct relationship between soil conservation and water quality? These fundamental questions are being examined in and out of SCS, and they need to be answered soon.

The public demands it. They are interested in all of these issues. . . and many more. In the area of water quality, for example, 85 percent of the people who responded to the RCA draft documents agreed with the objective to reduce sediment; 76 percent agreed with the objective to minimize nutrient pollution.

The program that finally emerges from the RCA process should not be limited to only one concern--the land and its ability to produce. It should encompass all natural resources.

Obviously, the program should take into consideration the traditional factors of agricultural production. It also should respond to nonmarket factors of value to society, such as maintaining fish and wildlife habitat, preserving wetlands, and retaining prime farmlands for agricultural purposes.

When considered separately, these nonmarket factors may not seem important enough to compensate for the public's cost of providing them. Yet, collectively, their value to society becomes obvious.

The program should encourage farmers and ranchers to apply to their land those conservation measures that will benefit them in the short run. And it should reimburse them, in part or in full, for measures they cannot otherwise afford and that benefit the public.

Finally, in my view of the future through the RCA window, the program should have an expanded and more fully viable role for State and local governments. It should be a program that is more in tune with the needs and desires of the American people.

Citizens of the United States are keenly interested in wise resource stewardship, as we found out clearly through public meetings, written comments, and the nationwide public opinion survey on soil and water resources conducted in November '79 for USDA. Some of the survey findings:

- . Americans are knowledgeable about conservation and are aware of conservation issues;
- . Half of all Americans consider the misuse of soil and water resources a very serious problem;
- . Half of all Americans also consider the loss of good farmland a very serious problem;
- . Two out of three Americans see conservation as a shared public and private responsibility;
- . By 7 to 1, Americans feel that action to protect farmland from erosion is a proper role for the Federal Government; and

- . Eight out of 10 Americans feel that the Federal Government should grant money to farmers and other landusers so to protect the soil and water.

Besides RCA, there are several other broad, nationwide efforts going on within the Department that have a bearing on resource stewardship.

First is the Department's "Structure of Agriculture" project, initiated a year ago by Secretary Bob Bergland. The goals are to explore all aspects of agriculture's structure, its present trends, and its future course, and to carry on a national dialogue with the agricultural community and the consumer public.

Another is the National Agricultural Lands Study. This is chaired jointly by USDA and the Council on Environmental Quality. Ten other Federal agencies or departments participate, as well as State and local governments, individual land users, and public interest groups.

The study is examining the availability of the Nation's agricultural lands, the extent and causes of their conversion to other uses, and the various ways they might be retained for agriculture, if that appears necessary. When the study is completed by the end of this year, a reference guide will be published. It will contain a comprehensive and detailed explanation of significant State and local methods to protect farmlands--something that is badly needed.

A third is the study of conservation incentives mandated by the President in his last Environmental Message.

A Global Viewpoint

Resource stewardship is also addressed in the recently released Global 2000 Report to the President, prepared by the Council on Environmental Quality and the U.S. Department of State.

Basically, the report says that if present trends continue, the world in the year 2000 will be more crowded, more polluted, more vulnerable to disruption, and less stable ecologically than the world we live in now.

In response to this projection, the President announced that he is appointing a Presidential Task Force on Global Resources and Environment, to be headed by CEQ Chairman Gus Speth. The task force will develop recommendations for strengthening and improving Federal efforts to deal with these problems. USDA is represented on this task force.

In addition, the President directed the State Department to arrange an international meeting of environmental and economic experts in Washington next year to discuss the interrelated questions of population, natural resources, environment, and economic development.

These meetings, conferences, and studies--and I have touched on only a few--underscore more than ever the necessity for each of us to stay abreast of changing times and technologies. One way to do this is to support the Soil Conservation Society of America and to encourage newcomers to SCS to join and participate. The percentage of SCSers who are members of SCSA is far below what it was just a few years ago, although the annual meeting in Dearborn this summer was, in my opinion, one of the best ever. Fewer than 30 SCS employees have now registered for the SCSA conference on "Remote Sensing for Resource Management" in late October. This should be of immediate interest for the future of our agency. You need to encourage people to attend at their own expense.

Women and Minorities

I would like to return now to some of our internal affairs. Women and minorities have not had the opportunities for employment and advancement within the agency that their white male co-workers have enjoyed. They have generally been the last hired, the last promoted, and the last moved into supervisory positions. They have suffered emotionally and economically from the prejudicial attitudes that have been at the heart of their problems.

As Chief of this agency, I am the one who is primarily responsible for seeing that women and minorities are not discriminated against, and I do not intend to shirk this important duty. On the contrary, I plan to wage an all-out war in the 1980's against bias on account of race or sex.

We want more women and minorities brought into professional and administrative jobs--jobs with career ladders and promotion potential--and if they're not, we want to know why. The old excuses--that these groups are underqualified and undertrained--are no longer valid, not with today's Upward Mobility, Equal Employment Opportunity, Hispanic Employment, and Federal Women's Programs.

I want all supervisors--both in the field and in Washington--to commit themselves to this goal and to initiate effective recruitment and affirmative action plans. I also want them to provide career counseling to the new recruits, as well as those who are already on the job.

Finally, I want all SCS supervisors to treat those employees who do not want to move into professional and administrative positions with dignity and respect. All too often, the morale of a competent and valuable support staff member has been broken by a supervisor's thoughtless but well-meant insistence that the employee keep moving up when he or she wants to stay put.

I wish that we could begin the new decade with a clean slate and erase the mistakes and attitudes of the past. Of course, we cannot. But we can learn from the past and make sure that we don't make the same mistakes over and over again.

We already have made some progress. A few years ago, there were no women and minorities in certain positions. Now there are a few. In 1975, Roberta Stevenson of Arizona became the first woman district conservationist in the

history of the Service. Today, 15 women are serving as district conservationists, and there are 145 minority district conservationists.

Overall, some 391 women and 619 minorities are employed full-time in professional and administrative positions within the agency. This represents 4.6 and 7.3 percent, respectively, of the permanent full-time workforce.

As you can see, we have a long way to go before these groups achieve full representation within the Service. Whether or not we reach this goal has a lot to do with the attitudes of State Conservationists and other SCS supervisors.

For example, a recent study of SCS women now employed in professional and technical positions indicated that some supervisors have a "nonsupportive" attitude toward their female subordinates. In fact, of the women who expressed an opinion on superior/subordinate relations, more than half had negative feelings about their supervisors.

In comparison, the women felt much better about their working relations with farmers and ranchers. Only 30 percent of the women who commented on cooperator relations expressed any negative opinions.

I think this shows all too clearly that some SCS supervisors could learn from the attitudes of the people we serve in the field. That is one reason why I have asked each member of my top staff to schedule a full week working with District Conservationists. That is also one reason why we invited four District Conservationists and an Area Conservationist to Rapid City to be active participants in the conference.

Essential Resource Facts

A vital task facing the Service, and one that is frequently misunderstood, involves our natural resource inventories--soil surveys, snow surveys, and inventory and monitoring. These inventories, some of which utilize remote sensing technology, are indispensable tools in planning and making land use decisions. They also provide the basis for requesting the money and people-power needed to get the conservation job done.

Soil surveys, which have been made by the Department since the late 19th Century, are completed for about 63 percent of the land area of the United States. Detailed information is available for some 1,200 counties. By 1997, we expect to have modern soil surveys for the whole country.

In the West, where we conduct snow surveys, we are continuing to apply new technology to carry out our work more effectively and at lower cost. SNOTEL--an automated data collection system--will be installed at 475 stations by the end of the year.

Our inventory and monitoring work provides us with essential information on the quantity and quality of our Nation's natural resources. For many years, we got by on informed guesswork about resources. Today, we require the most reliable data available to help us to develop a workable, responsive soil and water conservation program.

In the near future, I&M will give us reliable data on the conversion rate of farmland to nonfarm uses. . . as well as accurate measurements of soil losses due to erosion.

One part of the program involves the publication of important farmland maps. Maps for 9 States and over 400 counties have been published, and work is underway for more than 100 additional county maps. Maps of 1,300 high-priority counties--in regions undergoing rapid land-use changes or containing rich coal reserves--will be completed by 1986.

The need for these maps is obvious: County and State officials have to know where their best agricultural lands are located before they can take steps to retain them. The maps can also be used in assessing the environmental effects of Federal projects on these lands.

In order to respond to the 1985 RCA effort, we must have the data from the 1982 National Resources Inventory (NRI-'82) completed by the end of 1982. We can't do this without your help.

As you know, I've asked each State Conservationist to make this one of his top priorities. It's a tough job, but it has to be done. Some States are already getting county-reliable data with only current funds and personnel. . . so it can be done. It's a matter of scheduling and managing your operations effectively.

Some of you have asked how much you should spend on the data-collection effort. The answer is to spend as much as it takes to get the job done. But there are a number of ways that you can make the project cost-effective. Using State or area teams and contracting the work out are three examples. You can also enlist the aid of other agencies. In trials in Maine and California, for example, the Forest Service is collecting data for us.

I&M is not just something you should do because you have to. . . you should do it because you want to. . . because it's very much to your advantage. You're going to see a lot more targeting of money and manpower to critical problem areas in the future, and the inventory process is a good way of making your State's conditions known.

You also will have more data available to you on a "real time" basis, with your inputs translated immediately into information you can apply. You don't wait six months at the race track for information about the amount bet or the payoff. That data is available to the crowd almost instantaneously, and I don't see why our data shouldn't be available just as promptly.

Prompt Completion Needed

As you know, I've asked each State Conservationist to make completion of the NRI-'82 one of his top priorities. Some States are already getting county-reliable data with only current funds and personnel. . . so it can be done. It's a matter of scheduling and managing your operations wisely.

So let's work together in getting the NRI-'82 completed on schedule. The National Office will help, but the bulk of the job has to be done at the State level. And it will be done!

And while we're on priorities, I want to remind each State Conservationist who attended the Saratoga Springs Conference 2 years ago to be prepared to respond to my August 7 memo on priorities. Sometime at this conference we want you to tell us how you ranked your programs and activities and how you backed up your assignment of priorities with effective action.

We are targeting training activities to assure a highly qualified workforce trained in those techniques necessary to carry out our assigned responsibilities. We are in the process of securing data processing terminals for each State Office and TSC to permit more efficient and faster processing and transmission of data. This will help improve program operations and administrative activities.

New International Assignments

Our top staff also can learn--as well as make contributions--through selected international assignments. The Service is an internationally recognized authority in the fields of soil and water conservation, soil surveys, land use, and mapping. So far, the opportunity to demonstrate this to the world has been enjoyed by too few people within SCS. I have therefore asked Paul Howard and Jerry Hammond to send on international assignments, when the opportunity arises, State Conservationists, National Office staff at the level of Staff Director and above, and the Directors of the TSC's. International assignments are an education for our own people as well as helpful to the people of the countries we visit.

Getting Needed Work Done

Restrictions and limitations continue at the same time we add new activities and demands on your resources.

We managed our travel to meet the 10 percent reduction in gasoline consumption the President ordered for FY 1980.

To achieve this goal, we shared vehicles with other agency personnel going to the same locations. We also screened meetings, conferences, and training sessions, eliminating those requiring excess travel. We are continuing to do these things.

In many instances the travel restriction has made it difficult for you to do your jobs. But we have no choice.

In the near future, the Federal Government will be training drivers in energy conservation driving procedures and taking steps to improve vehicle maintenance.

In a way, it is a tribute to our agency and its record of achievement over the years that our friends in Congress and in rural America continue to make demands upon us. They evidently think we can deliver the goods. I don't think we'll disappoint them.

I know you are concerned that we are spread too thinly and that we are not able to do well enough those jobs that are so vital to conservation and resource management. That is why I have placed renewed stress on assigning priorities. We have to find ways to get the essential jobs done.

Seeking Non-Federal Help

As a result, we are seeking more ways to utilize district employees and other personnel from the non-Federal sector. The number of district employees continues to grow, year after year. The use of Intergovernmental Personnel Act assignments has permitted us to bring in needed talent from the outside and to use our talents and experience to assist other agencies. We are also using cooperative agreements and contractual services to get needed work done.

In addition, there are more State Government funds and personnel assigned to various conservation and anti-pollution activities this year than ever before. During the past decade, 20 States, the District of Columbia, and the Virgin Islands have enacted legislation to control erosion and sedimentation, and additional bills are pending before the current sessions of various State legislatures.

In the management arena, SCS has always given consideration to management initiatives that permit us to carry on our responsibilities efficiently and effectively. We continue to use annual plans of operation. These are a tool for charting the activities to be carried out at any given location, permitting maximum efficiency.

As new programs, like RAMP, RCA, and RCWP, come into being, we are establishing indices to measure productivity in those activities.

SCS-Administration Relationship

Every 4 years we do have a Presidential election. With every election, there is always the possibility the Administration will change. If it changes next January, I do not anticipate any different relationship between the Administration and top SCS leadership than we have had in past years.

Yes, the Civil Service Reform Act does authorize new job assignments for SES members following a 15-day notice. This procedure has already been used very extensively--vis-a-vis our reorganization of the National Office this spring. Following a change in Administration or leadership, SES members may not by law be reassigned for at least 120 days. After that period, we are under the same rules as we are today. I am not concerned about reassignments, and you should not be concerned either. All Senior Executive Service members in the SCS are career employees. We are protected, and I assure you that none of us who want to work will be on the street looking for a job, whether the Administration changes or not.

Let us also remember that we collectively are the major "buffer" between the political/policy decisionmakers and our technical professionals.

Political appointees can and do appreciate professional leaders and managers. We need to take or make possible positive actions. In general, that

is what we ask from our political leaders; but we shouldn't expect a better performance from them than we are able to deliver ourselves.

If we are going to maintain a technically competent image, we need to operate in a professional and ethical manner. All of us should make absolutely certain that our actions are above reproach. And remember, it's not only what is--but what appears to be--that determines the public opinion of any employee.

New Role for SCS

In his talk to you at last year's annual meeting in Florida, the Assistant Secretary for NRE envisioned an important new role for SCS during what I have termed the "Action Eighties."

He said:

"America needs a scrapping, venturesome, hard-driving lead agency to guide the Nation into a new era in natural resources conservation on nonfederal land. I personally pledge my every effort to help SCS to be that lead agency, and I ask each of you in this room to join me in making that goal a reality in the 1980's."

Rupe Cutler has left USDA to become a senior vice president of the Audubon Society, but what he said the Service should be continues to guide us.

He knew what we know--that if Americans don't make big changes in the ways we use soil and water, the bad news we'll get in 50 years may dwarf today's resource problems.

Erosion Still Serious

Sheet, rill, and wind erosion continue to be major national problems. Loss of soil on cropland from sheet and rill erosion is estimated to be 1.9 billion tons annually. In 18 states, the average cropland erosion rate exceeds 5 tons per acre and in 4 of these states and the Caribbean area, the annual rate exceeds 10 tons per acre.

Fifty percent of all sheet and rill erosion is on cropland. Marginal croplands and croplands generally considered unsuited to row crops make up 15 percent of the cropland acreage, yet account for 25 percent of the total amount of soil lost. Some cropland on slopes erode at many times their permissible rate. Cropland without adequate conservation treatment has an average annual soil loss of 1.7 billion tons--more than 8 times the amount on adequately treated cropland.

Pastureland, rangeland, and forest land account for another 1.9 billion tons of soil lost by sheet and rill erosion. In 4 States, the annual erosion rate on pastureland exceeds 5 tons per acre. The very steep acres make up one-fourth of the total pastureland acreage and account for 62 percent of the pastureland erosion. The rangeland sheet and rill erosion rate in 4 states is more than 5 tons per acre. Areas with limiting soil conditions make up one-third of the total rangeland acreage and account for 64 percent of the rangeland erosion.

About 17 percent of the nonfederal forest land is grazed and it erodes at 6 times the rate for the ungrazed forest land. In 15 states, the erosion rate on the grazed forest land exceeds 5 tons per acre.

Wind erosion in the 1976-77 winter blowing season damaged 8 million acres of land in the 10 Great Plains states. Over 80 percent of the damaged land was cropland. In 3 of the Great Plains States the average annual wind erosion rate for cropland exceeded 5 tons. Also, in 4 states the wind erosion rate on rangeland was 5 tons per acre or more.

We must deal with these resource problems more effectively than we have so far.

Because of RCA, RPA, and RREA, the Department has become a recognized leader in the conservation field, a reputation and image it has not enjoyed since New Deal days. Now the Department must lead the Nation through policies and actions to help assure a natural resource base that will provide food and fiber and forests for future generations--for the benefit of our most precious resource, our people.

Employee Responsibilities

In closing, let me say a word about how I view my responsibilities as Chief and those of all Service employees. My primary responsibility is to make sure that SCS is responsive to the important issues and demands of our time. In some cases, I must be an apostle of change, helping push the Service into new directions. In other cases, I will decide to guide SCS along well-charted, time-tested paths that continue to lead to more resource conservation on the land. These decisions are mine to make, based on experience, instinct, and the best thinking of my staff advisers.

It is not possible to make major policy decisions with the assurance that what one has done is 100 percent correct. But mistakes can be corrected. I am confident that with the counsel and support of all SCS employees, we will develop the right policies to reach our conservation goals.

It is our intention to delegate to the maximum the responsibility and authority to that level of SCS best able to provide leadership for the several programs.

I think that people can make any organization work, but good organization and good people are a winning combination. That is what we have today in the Soil Conservation Service!

Personally, I do have an appetite for my job and enjoy that unique combination of management, inspiration, psychiatry--and some arm-wrestling--that it takes to get things to happen.

I hope you enjoy your jobs, too!

It is the task of all employees of the Service to make sure that our work is done as effectively as possible. As we approach our 50th anniversary--and Hugh Hammond Bennett's 100th birthday--we must realize that any organization approaching such milestones must resist the tendency to become set in its ways.

It is essential that every employee be given the opportunity to carry out her or his responsibilities, knowing that each job is important to the success of the agency. As supervisors, we must make all employees aware of the value of their work and recognize them for their important contributions.

I have tried to encourage this positive attitude. In my speech last year at this meeting, I asked each of you to give me suggestions on how the agency might be improved. The responses I received were relevant, timely, and showed considerable thought and perspective.

Open Door Policy

I announced that my door would always be open to new ideas, suggestions, and certainly criticism, so that we might make this great organization even better. That will remain my practice as long as I am chief.

Obviously, I would prefer to hear constructive suggestions more often than complaints. However, I would not want to lead an organization where employees are timid about speaking out for change, where the accepted method is preferable to the best method. That is not the way to become the "scrapping, venturous, hard-driving lead agency" that should be our goal. That is not the way to serve our country.

So make no mistake: It is the role and responsibility of every employee--in whatever location and whatever position--to make certain that the Soil Conservation Service is continuously renewed and that the things we do continue to further the cause of conservation. I count on each of you to do that--and not a bit less.

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