

## CONSERVATION CHANGE AND CHALLENGE

I welcome this opportunity to join you. I am deeply concerned about your problems. I want to be closely associated with your progress and the dreams for the future of the 469 soil conservation districts in the Northeastern States and the 3,000 in our land.

Words are the legitimate weapons of civilized man facing the issues of his time. Your podium, as I see it, provides for a timely discussion of vital issues.

This is the time to speak for the unity of the countryside in all its values and uses. It is the time to advocate the protection and development of our resources as a whole, in accordance with their capabilities and the goals of the community. It is a time to speak for action that will meet the oncoming demands of a growing Nation. It is a time to forestall premature and disorderly commitments of resource use.

We find ourselves in an age demanding instant satisfaction of ill-considered demands--often hypocritically made in the name of progress and society. Therefore, I believe it is a time to come forward, to be heard. It is a time to assist conservation district governing boards to assume fully their responsibilities of leadership in soil, in water, and in related conservation work.

In a steel mill a great bar of steel was suspended vertically by a delicate chain. Nearby a bottle cork was suspended by a silk thread. Could the small cork held only by a fragile thread set the steel bar into motion? The cork was swung gently against the steel bar. The bar remained motionless. But this was repeated again and again. In ten minutes the bar gave some evidence of feeling uncomfortable, and a "nervous chill" ran over it. Then ten minutes later the chill was followed by a tremor of vibration. At the end of an hour the great bar was swinging like a pendulum in concert with the tiny cork.

How many "potential" leaders "give up the ghost" and desert their goal because they stopped just before a "nervous chill" ran over their bar of steel?

There is an old Greek proverb that says, "Before you score, you must have a goal." Our goal is that the Nation's future lies in rural America. The vast countryside can offer relief from the teeming cities and their congested suburbs--provide ample land and water to serve the expanding needs of commerce and industry, and broad acres on which to build garden communities for tomorrow's generations.

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Address by Norman A. Berg, Deputy Administrator for Field Services, Soil Conservation Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, at the Woodland Workshop, Manchester, New Hampshire, October 14, 1966.

If we act in time with wisdom!

We have become, in my lifetime, a nation of city-dwellers. Each day and each year, more and still more Americans concentrate in the towns, cities, and suburbs. To them life naturally centers where they work, make their homes--raise their families. And from these centers of population emerge a pattern of mutual interests, problems, and understanding. A kinship is growing up among these people of Albuquerque and Atlanta, of Baltimore and Boston, of Pittsburgh and Philadelphia, of Memphis and Minneapolis.

This kinship derives from such typically metropolitan concerns as transportation, housing, crime, schools, and recreation.

What then happens to the countryside? Increasingly, it becomes an obstacle in time and space--merely landscape separating cities. It is to many--far too many--a "land in between" to be crossed as quickly as possible via superhighways, fast trains or faster planes. Along this new and urban oriented generation, there is danger that the land in between will be regarded increasingly as just "undeveloped" space.

The American countryside--that expanse of nature separating our cities and towns and rural hamlets--represents the land we have left to grow in, play in, and build on the American dream.

That is all we have; and when divided and divided again for the multiple needs of a Nation growing rapidly in population, in urban development, in highway mileage, in an array of man-oriented uses alien to nature, this natural landscape that once seemed so limitless shrinks before us at every turn--and we are made aware of the challenging crisis in the countryside.

The crisis we face in the countryside is a crisis of quality in a Nation whose people demand quality in the marketplace but have failed to provide for it in the natural environment.

The recognition of this crisis in the countryside has given birth to a new concept of conservation.

The concept of new conservation says that as populations grow and people live in greater and greater concentrations, we must consider the total environment and not just those values that can be measured in dollars and cents.

When we consider the total environment, we must take account of what conservationists call the "vulnerable" values. These values--including wildlife, the beauty of nature, space for growing and living, pollution control, and recreation--are especially vulnerable because it is hard to measure them in dollars and cents.

We are seeing a definite blossoming of concern for such benefits--benefits that are essential if we are to enjoy an environment of real quality.

The President has dramatized the importance of these values in his call for a Great Society. The First Lady has directed our attention especially to the importance of beauty in the environment. And throughout the Nation there is a growing feeling that our generation has a special responsibility, in a world of change, to protect the qualities of environment that have enduring value in our civilization.

Along with the new concept has come an awakening--a greater awareness-- in conservation today.

Conservation has moved from the province of the few to the embrace of millions. This is as it should be. Yet we cannot help asking, with considerable anxiety, is the awakening sufficient? Is the awareness adequate?

Today I want to examine one important phase:

Woodland Conservation in the Soil Conservation Service  
History of Forestry in the Soil Conservation Service

When the Soil Conservation Service was established in 1935 and assumed the functions of the Soil Erosion Service that began in 1933, forestry was an integral part of the operations. More than 300 forestry positions were staffed with graduate foresters. Tree nurseries, tree planting, thinning, pruning, timber stand improvement, and the preparation of detailed forest management plans were an accepted phase of SCS operations. The Soil Conservation Service at that time was operating demonstration projects and CCC camps. Both the projects and the camps were for dual purposes. One was to provide demonstrations in erosion control practices, and the other was to provide work for the enrollees of CCC camps and for other individuals through the WPA, ERA, etc., on the demonstration projects. All of the forestry work of the Service in those days was under the direction of camp or project foresters. This included detailed forestry plans for the wooded lands of the farms and ranches and the application of all forestry practices. Soil Conservation Service nurseries grew the tree planting stock that was planted free of charge. In fact all forestry work was done for the landowner without cost.

Through our work in demonstration projects and CCC camps, several valuable lessons were learned:

1. Unless the farmer or rancher completely understood the needs for a particular conservation practice, he did not really accept this practice.
2. Even though the conservation practices that were established without cost on the farms and ranches of the United States demonstrated rather dramatically their ability to control erosion, the results of these practices were not appreciated by the landowners as much as those same practices applied with the individual efforts and equipment of the landowner himself. The free trees, the free terraces, the free

diversions, etc., quite often remained "government property" and were destroyed or obliterated within a few years.

3. A practice-by-practice type of conservation was not effective. Quite often these practices conflicted one with another and with the interest and desires of the landowner--and the technicians.
4. The cost of doing business with a complete staff of specialists at each location for the limited number of landowners and operators served under this system was not an economical method of operation.

One of the first modifications of the SCS forestry field work began in 1937 with the assignment to the SCS of responsibilities for the Farm Forestry projects under the Norris-Dokey Act. Farm forestry was emphasized under SCS direction and concentrated in these projects established throughout the United States.

It was about 1937 that things really began to change. The Soil Conservation District enabling Act was developed. With certain modifications it was passed by legislative bodies in State after State. Soil Conservation Districts were formed. Our experience in the Camps and Projects gave rise to the philosophy of the complete farm plan and the overall objective of the SCS, later to become the objective of the Department of Agriculture that "every acre be used within its capability and treated according to its need." The "Soil Conservationist" was created and became the general practitioner. He was developed by training in all of the many disciplines affecting soil, water, and plant conservation and instructed in the coordination of these many sciences into a balanced and basic conservation plan for the entire unit of ownership or enterprise. Foresters, biologists, agronomists, engineers, etc., were given the needed fundamental training and technical supervision in all phases of conservation. The Soil Conservation Service ceased to be an agency with an engineering program, an agronomy program, a biology program, and a forestry program. Instead it became an agency with a conservation program, combining as phases of this conservation program the many sciences and disciplines necessary for the conservation of the soil, water and plant resources and taking into consideration the needs, desires, and capability of the landowners and operators.

There were other changes, too, as time went on. The farm forestry activities initiated under the supervision of the Soil Conservation Service were shifted first to the Extension Services, and then in 1945, to the U.S. Forest Service. The Forest Service, in turn, delegated their responsibilities to the State forestry agencies and entered into cooperative arrangements for the supervision and financing of the Cooperative Forest Management work as we know it today.

In retrospect, then, forestry has been a part of the activities and concern of the Soil Conservation Service since the Service began in the early 30's. There have been certain changes of functions, certain changes in emphasis, but the conservation and wise use of the wooded lands of farms, ranches, and



other land units in the United States is no less important today than it was in 1933.

#### Woodland Conservation Policy

In July 1954, a statement appeared in Woodland Memorandum SCS-1 and was later incorporated in the revised Woodland Policy statement of the Soil Conservation Service, Woodland Memorandum-1 (Rev. 1) dated November 2, 1965, which reads as follows:

"In working with landowners and operators, the Service is concerned with the conservation, use and management of the soil and water and related resources of the entire operating unit. This service will help each cooperator give all woodlands the same careful attention that is given to cropland, pastureland, rangeland, recreation land and wildlife land."

This has been and is now a part of the basic policy of the Soil Conservation Service.

Prior to November 1965, there were 11 Woodland Memorandums in the Soil Conservation Service Woodland Series. Now there are two. The revision of Woodland Memorandum-1 combined the basic features of the other existing memorandums except Woodland-9 into one document containing the essential woodland conservation policy of the Soil Conservation Service. The issuing of this memorandum caused some concern in various quarters. Apparently there were those who thought that the Soil Conservation Service was changing its policy and attitude toward the woodland conservation or the forestry phase of the program. Actually there is nothing new in the revised memorandum. It simply consolidates 10 memorandums into one. We, and the Forest Service, gave it widespread distribution.

Many people read the revised Woodland Memorandum and there were many different versions of what was read. Even though we felt that all of the provisions of this memorandum were clearly and concisely stated and that every part of the document was perfectly understandable, we found that this was not the case. There were many interpretations, both within and outside the Soil Conservation Service.

Perhaps a brief discussion of this memorandum will help clarify some of its points. First of all, this memorandum is based on an interpretation of Title I of the Department Regulations. There have been no serious objections to these interpretations. In general, this policy statement (1) indicates those services that we will render district cooperators, (2) those services that we may render, and (3) those services that we will not provide for landowners and operators.

We will, according to our current policy, provide landowners and operators with soils information and interpretations, alternatives of land use and available cost-return information for all land uses, including woodland,

that will make it possible for the landowner to determine the use or uses to which he will put his land. When wooded land will be converted to other uses or used for something other than the production of a merchantable wood crop, the cooperator will be provided sufficient information to make sound decisions for the conservation treatments needed.

Now, this is an important function and not one that can be dismissed by walking to the edge of the woods and predetermining that simply because there are trees growing that the land will be used for the production of forest crops. Wooded land has many other uses. And even though the owner decides, after being presented the alternatives, that the land will be used for growing forest products, he may need a bit of motivation even to ask for the help of a forester. Then, too, if he decides to use this wooded land for wildlife, hunting, fishing, personal recreation of other types or for income-producing recreation, the SCS has a responsibility for helping the landowner plan and apply the needed conservation practices.

In short--to provide the minimum services prescribed--the SCS technician must "help each cooperator give all woodlands the same careful attention that is given to cropland, pastureland", etc. This means knowing the alternatives for the many uses of wooded land and reviewing these with the owner in the woods.

Soil Conservation Service personnel will not provide such specialized forestry services as timber estimating, timber marking, log grading, growth studies, etc.

Between those items for which we will provide services and those services we will not provide, there lies the "gray" area that may have caused some differences in the interpretations of Woodland Memorandum-1 (Rev. 1). We do not feel that there should be misunderstanding. Our policy plainly states that we may furnish certain types of services, but only with adequately trained employees and then only when such services are carefully coordinated with the forestry services made available by the U.S. Forest Service through the various State forestry agencies and by the Extension Services.

Over the years, the Soil Conservation Service has developed and maintained a very close working relationship with the governing boards of the 3,000 soil and water conservation districts in the United States. We have a mutual interest in the conservation and wise use of the total land and water resources of the 3,679,000 landowners and operators in these districts. To date, we have given some type of technical assistance to approximately 2,000,000 of these owners. There are over 1,500,000 landowners in soil conservation districts that we have not yet reached. There are another 800,000 private landowners and operators not in districts and there are untold millions of urban dwellers who are interested in soil, water, and plant conservation, and in whom we, in the Soil Conservation Service and in soil conservation districts, are also interested. During the past 33 years,

we have done an outstanding job in helping the farmers, ranchers, and other landowners conserve their soil, water and plant resources. We have not done enough and there is still much to do. We cannot do the complete conservation job alone, nor do we want to. The supervisors and commissioners of soil and water conservation districts recognize that there are other sources of help for getting this total conservation job done. Each session of Congress sees additional legislation passed that will facilitate the conservation of our resources.

The Soil Conservation Service is keenly aware of the role of the State forestry agencies in the conservation and wise use of the forested lands of the nation. We recognize that they are specialists in this field. We also recognize that they have certain responsibilities in forestry that have been delegated to them by the legislatures of their States.

The State Forester and his staff have certain responsibilities. Soil and water conservation districts under State law also have certain responsibilities. The Soil Conservation Service, the Extension Service, the Farmers Home Administration and other agencies also have responsibilities affecting forest lands. There is one item, however, that we all have in common; the individual landowners and operators of the nation. We are their public servants.

Within the framework of the authorizations under which the various agencies operate, certainly there is room for some unnecessary duplication of effort. There is room for misunderstanding; there is room for agency and personal jealousies. At the same time, there is unlimited room for cooperation; for the coordination of the efforts of the various agencies so that these farmers and ranchers are served most efficiently and effectively. That is precisely why this was included as a part of the woodland policy of the SCS. Furthermore, we feel that the logical place for this coordination of efforts is at the State and local level. We like to think that the soil and water conservation districts of the various States constitute a logical media through which these efforts can be coordinated.

The coordination of the efforts of the Soil Conservation Service and the facilities offered by the State forestry agency does not give away any of the responsibilities that we in the Soil Conservation Service have to landowners and operators in soil and water conservation districts. It does not lessen the need for our soil conservationists, our work unit conservationists, in fact, our entire field personnel being adequately trained in the fundamentals of woodland conservation. It does not lessen the need for a staff woodland conservationist being available to train work unit people in woodland conservation and being available to give him supporting specialist services. Neither does this coordination indicate that we are asking for anything other than the privilege of working closely with personnel of other agencies and with soil and water conservation districts to provide these landowners and operators the ultimate in professional and technical services so that the final result will be a much advanced conservation program in which every individual is a partner in getting the job done.

Conservation begins on the land, on each individual acre. As a Nation, we have developed our resource conservation policies on the firm basis of essential involvement at the local level, for we are a people wedded to the concept of individual initiative and grass-roots participation in the public affairs that concern us.

But we must understand, too, that our State and Federal governments also represent the interests of the individual and the local community. And we have wisely and properly drawn upon State and Federal resources to support the local effort. We have done this in the National interest because the summation of local interest is national interest. That is how we have advanced for more than a quarter of a century in the conservation and development of the Nation's lands and waters.

We are increasingly concerned as a people with eliminating stream pollution, increasing water supply, assuring sound land use, and conserving beauty in the landscape.

This trend to urban living described earlier has caused a revolution in land use--not only in the urban centers and in their immediate surroundings, but in the countryside that must serve the greater population more broadly and intensely than in the past. The new conservation is a town and country outlook.

The urban explosion coincides with the new technology that has brought increased efficiency to agricultural production. We still have more land for purposes other than crop production, and we have learned to make the land and waters serve multiple uses.

We can do those things in the new conservation that have been born of local initiative and cooperation, and advanced by the dedication and wise efforts of an enlightened national government.

Let us not erroneously assume that all is well with the land.

There remains a serious backlog of conservation projects to be initiated and accomplished. There are dams to be built and land measures to be applied. There are studies of soil types to be made so that we may be assured of building our country on a sound footing. There are rivers and streams to be protected against siltation and cleansed of pollution. There are lakes to be established and others to be restored. There are forests to be protected against heedless destruction, and improved and made more useful for public and private benefit.

There remains a need for more professional conservationists to guide the Nation's conservation work. And there is need of greater financial support at all levels to extend the benefits of this effort throughout all of the land.



Today, with rising demands upon the undeveloped acres of this Nation, the American people must support determined, concerted action to preserve the values that remain, to restore those desired values which have vanished through waste, thoughtlessness, and selfish design, and to develop for the benefit of all the people the great natural resources that have been allotted to this fortunate land.

We must work even harder to prevent the disastrous floods that still plague many of our river valleys--the tragic wash of good soil into the river beds and down to sea--the mutilation of the landscape that destroys the natural beauty that is meant for all to enjoy.

We must end the deep poverty that afflicts much of rural America. We must breach the urban wall that seals off countless city youth from the richness of their heritage in the open countryside.

We are committed as conservators of the great American estate to honor the blessings of a generous Providence, to respect the gifts of a bountiful nature, to provide for the future as we draw upon the resources that are available for our use and that are committed to our care. We, as a Nation, have reached the first stage--that of the "nervous chill" experienced by the steel bar.

With continued dedication to the task of conserving our vital land and water resources we will insure the future prosperity of this great Nation. The full swing of the pendulum. To this challenging and rewarding task your national government is dedicated. Working together we can achieve our loftiest goals.

We enjoy a period of grace--even now--before the remaining vestiges of nature unspoiled by man are erased. We still have time to protect, restore, and develop the lands and waters of rural America--if we act with resolve and dispatch.

We can--and must--return to an alliance with nature. It is simply a matter of desire, of discipline, and of dedication.