

CREATIVE CONSERVATION
FOR
COMMUNITIES OF TOMORROW

I welcome this opportunity to join you. I am concerned about your problems. I wanted to be associated with your Annual Convention and the future of the ⁷²soil and water conservation districts in Wisconsin and the 3,010 in our land. There is the personal pleasure of meeting with old and new friends again. Too, there is the professional pleasure of discussing soil and water conservation with those in the field. I always carry away from these meetings new ideas, fresh viewpoints--more than I bring.

Your conference, as I see it, provides for a timely discussion of vital issues. The accelerating demands of our time do place a premium on effort. Dedication and work are basic to soil and water conservation, to resource development, and to the basic welfare of our great Nation.

It is nothing new to say that a good community can be produced only by good men--or that we get out of life about what we put into it. Yet men of good will and their efforts are, indeed, essential ingredients of a useful, civilized community.

There are other ingredients, of course: skills, planning, and vision--sacrifice, determination and faith--encouragement, investment, and opportunity for self-expression and for accomplishment.

Material used by Norman A. Berg, Deputy Administrator for Field Services, Soil Conservation Service, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C., for talk before the Annual Meeting of the Wisconsin Association of Soil and Water Conservation District Supervisors, December 7, 1967, Sheraton-Schroeder Hotel, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Therefore, I feel that 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. Above all, it is a time to help conservation district governing boards to assume fully their responsibilities of local leadership in soil, in water, and in related conservation and resource development work.

I am especially grateful to join resource conservation and watershed development leaders in this great State who feel as I do on this matter of strengthening the role of districts for future action. Your speakers should help answer some of the problems raised by your convention theme. Knowing many of you personally and of your remarkable work for three decades, I predict great days ahead for the citizens of Wisconsin.

The key, as always, is people, and their desire, urge, or will to achieve. Psychologists tell us most people in this world can be divided into two broad groups. There is first that minority challenged by opportunity and willing to work hard to achieve something. Second, is the majority who really do not care all that much. Your record of nearly 50,000 district cooperators and more than one-third of the needed soil and water conservation work completed on farms and other lands suggests you are in that former group--you care!

These basic resources form the common bond joining the varied interests of all resource users, whatever may be their specialized definition of what conservation means.

Concern for Conservation

Concern still 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.

Our history has been one of steady and progressive evolution. As new problems have appeared, districts have moved to help solve these problems. At first you worked mostly with individual farmers; next came work with groups of farmers. Later, programs expanded to include whole communities-- in watershed and resource conservation and development projects, BPA work and other area-wide activities.

In other words, as the times have changed, districts have changed.

A look at progress in Wisconsin tells the story:

- 1/6 of the State's 35 million acres have basic soil conservation plans
- 3 percent of the needed soil and water conservation work on farms and ranches is being completed annually
- 27 watershed projects have been authorized for planning
- 17 watershed projects are approved for operations
- 72 districts have updated their long-range programs.
- The development of broad framework programs in the 36 soil and water conservation districts in the Upper Great Lakes Economic Development Region of northern Wisconsin is an outstanding accomplishment.

This activity has generated enthusiastic support from, and active involvement of, the local SWCD governing bodies. They have brought the nature of the resources in this region into focus. Broad framework programs are developed in 14 broad program areas. The programs include expanding of enterprises in agriculture, recreation, and forestry.

The development of the framework programs sets the stage for local leaders to develop projects and group enterprises on a local basis. Local leaders are now in the process of developing these projects to carry out the proposals in the broad framework programs. This activity has resulted in active involvement of many local leaders and people who have assumed leadership and accepted the programs as their responsibility. It has resulted in the revision and updating of district long-range programs to include actions necessary to carry out the broad framework programs.

Acceleration in Cost Sharing for Soil Surveys

- The first cost sharing agreement for accelerating the completion of soil surveys was signed in 1963 with the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission. Since 1964, the soil survey has been recognized by local, county, regional, and State organizations and governmental bodies in the State as a valuable basic inventory having multiple planning and engineering uses. As a result the number of cost sharing agreements has risen sharply from one in 1964 to eight in 1967. The SCS in Wisconsin received \$64,992 cost sharing funds in 1967 and expects to receive an even larger amount in 1968 and

subsequent years. The interest in acceleration of soil surveys through local cost sharing has now reached the point where SCS funds and personnel available can no longer keep up with the demand and priorities need to be determined as to when surveys can start.

So no one I know believes that the problems of conservation districts are exactly the same today as they were in 1937--nor that the solutions to them are the same, nor that farming has not changed, nor that the social pattern of our population is the same as it was.

A rural and limited soil conservation concept simply no longer suffices in a society that has become increasingly urban, a society in which the interests of the users of resources have become equal to those of the owners of resources.

Conservation today encompasses the full sweep of interrelated natural resources and their management and use. Use, restoration, and preservation are compatible aims. Man is but one element of the ecological whole.

Emerging now is a special challenge to fit the activities and needs of man harmoniously into his total environment. The recognition of this crisis in the countryside has given birth to a new concept of creative conservation.

This concept of "full use" conservation says that as populations grow and people live in greater and greater concentrations, we must consider the total environment.