

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 23rd Annual Convention and the future of the 105 soil and water conservation districts in Kansas 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.

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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 Kansas Association of Soil Conservation Districts, December 4, 1967, Hotel Broadview, Wichita, Kansas

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, "Resource Development--Will Districts Meet the Challenge?" Knowing many of you personally and of your remarkable work for three decades, I predict great days ahead for Kansans!

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 100,000 district cooperators and more than one-third of the needed soil and water conservation work completed on farms and ranches 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.

We do know that an expanding national economy cannot long endure on a declining resource base. A rising standard of living cannot be sustained in a deteriorating environment. Fulfilling the needs of millions of people yet unborn cannot be assured unless we achieve full use of natural resources and planned patterns of land use without delay. The fruits of an expanding technology cannot be enjoyed unless technology itself is harnessed to meet the goals of the new conservation. This is the challenge leaders at all levels must meet.

Conservation 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 projects, resource conservation and development projects, and GPCP work and other area-wide activities.

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

A look at progress in Kansas tells the story:

--Half the State's 525 million acres have basic soil conservation plans

52.5

--1.5 percent of the needed soil and water conservation work on farms and ranches is being completed annually

--49 watershed projects have been authorized for planning

--29 watershed projects are approved for operations

--2,940 farms and ranches have GPCP contracts on 2,212,085 acres

--95 districts have updated their long-range programs,

--The planning of water impoundment structures in cooperation with the Kansas Highway Commission is an outstanding accomplishment. Cooperative highway projects are carried out between Soil Conservation Districts, the State Highway Commission and others with the SCS providing consultive technical assistance. These are projects where conventional highway structures crossing drainage-ways are replaced by pipe drop inlets, which in conjunction with highway fill, create water storage reservoirs. Water storage contributes to conservation of water, grade stabilization, recreation, flood control and beautification.

--An example of national interest deals with the Agricultural Hall of Fame and National Center. Their Board of Directors requested technical assistance in preparing a complete conservation plan for the lands surrounding the buildings. The Hall of Fame property consists of 275 acres of land located 8 miles west of Kansas City, Kansas.

In the spring of 1966, a soil survey of the property was completed. SCS specialists in the fields of agronomy, engineering, wildlife, recreation and plant materials have provided on-site technical services and assistance to the Wyandotte County Soil Conservation District in the development of a basic conservation plan.

The plan, now complete, has been approved by the Board of Directors. The Board desires to develop the soil, water and plant resources so that they will provide a demonstration and a "show case" of sound land use and treatment that is so essential to the future of agriculture.

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.

conservation and community missions of USDA in light of needs today and for the rest of the century. They outline timely new policies and goals. They point to ways these policies and goals will be implemented.

The publications have threefold significance:

1. Spelling out the nature and dimension of action urgently required to meet the resource and community needs of American people between now and the year 2000.
2. Demonstrating that, by the very location and character of these problems, USDA has major responsibility for leadership, and
3. Finally, charting for USDA the essential steps we must take in our cooperative efforts with other agencies and units of government, and with citizen groups, to achieve the goals.

The unmatched performance of the successful commercial farm, ranch, and forest enterprises in this country is eloquent testimony to the outstanding job you have done--and continue to do.

But there are other problems afflicting the country now--other challenges, other needs, new priorities.

We, too, know that success and fame are fleeting. What would have been sufficient for yesterday is apt to be too little and too late for tomorrow.

There is an old Greek proverb that says, "Before you score, you must have a goal." So, in closing I suggest we each remember,

"As you ramble on through life, brother  
Whatever be your goal,  
Keep your eye upon the doughnut  
And not upon the hole,"

Speaking in Chicago, the Secretary said that agriculture's job is far from done and never will be. For example:

"We expect that remote sensing equipment in spacecraft will be linked with computers to identify and measure land use... detect plant diseases, insect infestations and drought... assess crop stands and vigor and to predict future yields... and determine whether soils are suitable for growing needed crops... We are also hard at work to devise better methods for disposing of farm and processing wastes."

In closing the Secretary said:

"Today's world, much of which is hungry and despairing, needs all that science can give, and more,"

Then he told the story of a student who came upon Louis Pasteur bent over his microscope:

"Pardon me," said the student, "I thought you were praying."

Replied Pasteur, "I was."