

CURRENT ISSUES

- I. The setting for our Soil Conservation Service activities: floods... water shortages...water waste...food prices...energy prices...land-use laws and ordinances...still increasing environmental awareness.
 - A. We are likely to see:
 1. A broader understanding of agriculture and our basic mission of soil and water conservation.
 2. A renewed emphasis on controlling soil loss; upgrading water quality; preserving prime agricultural land; saving water in agriculture and elsewhere; and saving energy.
 3. Some positive benefits from our environmental "hassle" of the past few years...the criticism is softening...the environmentalist approach is nearing the middle of the road... we have learned...I expect you to follow--not fight--our SCS policies and guidelines on environmental issues.
 - B. We have three major new assignments in one year--a record.
 1. Resources Conservation Act
 - Budget status for 1978, 1979
 - Hundreds of local meetings have been excellent; but we need to work even harder on maximum expression of diverse views. More people deserve to express their ideas and have them considered.

Outline for talk by Norman A. Berg, Associate Administrator, USDA Soil Conservation Service, at a meeting of SCS employees, Reno, Nevada, June 13, 1978.

- We need to be on the lookout for new ideas...and for the impacts of new technology.
- We need to resolve many policy issues related to RCA-- we are looking at more than 30 separate issues regarding land, water, energy, habitat, etc...and setting priorities among them.
- We need to continue close coordination with other Federal agencies and conservation districts. We met recently with several agencies to review an agreement on inventorying and monitoring and other joint activities related to renewable natural resources.
- Timetable is a tight one...but the erosion inventories and land-use studies you gave inputs for recently are a big help. They will allow us to have some fresh data in a hurry-up first appraisal.
- RCA can help us do a better job of describing dollar and people needs--but don't expect any big increases. RCA can help pinpoint problem areas, find more effective conservation techniques, measure program effectiveness.

2. Rural Clean Water Program

- New era of local, state, federal cooperation.
- Program design, draft regulations, final rules.
- Interagency coordinating committees.
- Aid is for controlling critical nonpoint source water pollution in high priority areas marked in "Section 208" plans.

3. Rural Abandoned Mine Program

--Public hearings...small attendance.

--Written comments, most of them favorable.

--Environmental impact statement on the program will be finished about mid-July.

--Eligible lands identified in 377 counties in 29 states.

--Program in operation by August 1978?

--Emphasis in RAMP is on abandoned coal mines...under regular CO-01 program, we need to help landowners and local and state governments consider reclamation needs on sand and gravel and other mined lands.

C. We have continuing assignments in many ongoing programs...outlook for future?

D. President's Water Resources Policy recommendations...

--Push on water conservation, in our programs as well as in sewer and water assistance, housing programs, etc...

--Speed implementation of Executive Order on floodplain management...

--Emphasize non-structural measures where feasible...

--Work to resolve water rights issues.

--On small watershed projects, continued application of channel guidelines...accelerated use of land treatment and cost-sharing incentives...post-project monitoring.

E. Status of Federal reorganization proposals.

F. President's determination to reduce Federal Budget deficit by \$17 billion.

II. Because of today's setting...in some cases in spite of it...career opportunities in SCS are tremendous.

A. We must be ahead of the times...not just keeping up with the times...and not being old-fashioned.

--We must give farmers the forward-looking technology that fits the situation at hand.

--Where there are choices between the tried-and-true and a newer kind of solution to land or water problems, do we too often rely on the tried-and-true...which may not be the best solution?

--Do we really know what Best Management Practices are?

--We need to try to do our job better than ever before.

--Dudley Flood said: Don't try to enter the Grand Prix with a Volkswagen unless you know a lot of shortcuts.

B. We need to be advocates..to take the bushel basket off our light.

C. We must emphasize and reemphasize QUALITY--

--We are being watched.

--We have to answer on the efficient/effective use of all our people and dollars...costs going up and UP.

--We have to answer on the efficient/effective use of all of our policies and guidelines, especially on the environment.

--All 216 million Americans have become "local"...we don't have an isolated constituency.

D. We need to set PRIORITIES...work on the right things in the right order at the right time...stress the "must-do" jobs, eliminate the nice-to-do.

E. We need to build an even stronger partnership with soil and water conservation districts.

III. We need to expect of all SCS employees:

A. Mobility...the real opportunities seldom come to anyone right where he or she is. Look for your opportunity...recognize it...prepare for it...take advantage of it.

B. Competence.

C. Integrity.

D. Loyalty.

E. Dedication...to public service and to the Soil Conservation Service.

IV. We need to expect of SCS supervisors:

A. Place the right employee with the right skills in the right spot.

B. Provide him or her with the right motivation.

C. Provide truly equal opportunity for women and minorities in employment and in the use of our technical assistance.

D. Provide leadership. "If they ain't following, you ain't leading!"

V. In the middle of all of these expectations, I am very proud of all of you.

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