

## ESTABLISHING NATIONAL PRIORITIES FOR LAND USE

In every state I've visited in recent years, land use is one of the prime subjects for discussion, argument, proposals, and legislation.

In all parts of the United States, conflicting demands for limited land resources are placing severe strains upon economic, social and political institutions; on the political process; and on the natural environment. Farmer groups oppose real-estate developers; homeowners collide with highway planners; water based recreation interest groups are pitted against oil companies; environmentalists fight the power, mining, and timber interests and sometimes the agricultural interests; cities and counties question state actions and fear Federal actions; and the suburb is at odds with the inner city.

Professor Raymond Vlasin of Michigan State University characterized his state's land use problems this way:

"First, they are urgent. The incidence of land use problems and the conflicts arising from them appear to be growing in number and severity.

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Material for talk by Norman A. Berg, Associate Administrator, Soil Conservation Service, at the USDA Executive Workshop in Agri-Dynamics, Frederick, Maryland, May 14, 1974.

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"Second, land use problems are broadly pervasive. They affect both metropolitan and nonmetropolitan areas. They affect all manner of public agencies, private groups, citizen groups, and charitable and religious groups. They affect all manner of persons involved in the production, processing, and consumption of goods and services from land.

"Third, the problems are complex and interrelated. Urban, suburban, exurban, and rural problems are intricately interrelated. Some of the most crushing problems arise from the complex of metropolitan area demands on nonmetropolitan regions and communities. Metropolitan areas look to nonmetropolitan areas for waste disposal, housing, industrial location, utility corridors, transportation, power generation, water supplies, recreation, and second homes in rural environments. Many of the difficult problems arise at the interface between urban use expansion and adjacent rural uses impacted by that expansion. Other problems arise from urban demands or urban developments that "leapfrog" great distances into rural areas.

"Fourth, the land use problems are statewide. No area of the State is free of them. All areas experience one or more major land use problems."

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This characterization probably fits the state in which each of you resides and works.

What is the setting in which land-use questions have become so prominent? What is land used for in this country, and how well? What interest and involvement does the Department of Agriculture have? I'd like to answer these questions with the help of some slides, and then talk about some of the specific issues and conflicts and the legislative actions that are being shaped to resolve them.

LIGHTS OUT    SLIDE RUN BEGINS

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1. Of all the nations on earth, the United States is among the richest in terms of its land and water resources, its beautiful countryside, and its tremendously favorable and varied climate.
2. The future of the land resource is in the hands of millions of people who every day make decisions--good or bad--on how it is used.
3. What is the ownership of our land? Fifty-eight percent of it is in private hands--owned by individual farmers, ranchers, businessmen, homeowners, and industry.
4. From this land comes most of the food, fiber, and timber we consume and export.
5. One third of the private land is in forest.
6. Twenty-seven percent is grassland pasture and range.
7. And about one-fifth is cropland.
8. Despite an almost 200-percent increase in U.S. population since 1900, these proportions in land use have changed very little.
9. The reasons for this are varied and include agriculture-related technology, government programs, and the private enterprise role. America's crop production per acre continues an upward trend.

10. The second largest segment of land is under Federal management. This includes 34 percent of our total land area--759 million acres--half of it in Alaska and most of the remainder still west of the Mississippi. Some 187 million acres are managed by the USDA Forest Service. But the largest segment is public domain, under control of the Bureau of Land Management. Military land, national parks, and wildlife refuges add up too.
11. Some of those vast areas--more than 15 million acres--have been set aside as wilderness and primitive areas where timber is not harvested and most other uses are banned.
12. Much of the Federally owned land, however, is under multiple-use management. Recreation is a growing use of Federal and private land.
13. Another 6 percent of land in the U.S. is in State and local ownership.
14. And 2 percent is Indian land.
15. For the most part, America's land is sparsely populated. Over the last 20 years, 1,500 counties lost population.

16. To find the concentrations of people, we still must look to the cities...to the metropolitan areas. Here, on 3 percent or less of our land, more than 70 percent of the population lives.
17. This includes land for transportation--super highways, railroads, and airports. Land for transportation is highly visible although it takes up only 1.4 percent of the total land area. And it has taken up some of America's prime agricultural land, irretrievably.
18. Here's a summary of land use in America by acreage totals. We have quite a mix of public and private, rural and urban, good and bad uses.
19. The way in which Americans use land has been, for the most part, good! Businessmen, homeowners, public land management agencies, colleges and universities, and especially farmers and ranchers have had a big hand in using land properly.
20. But we still use land in ways that are not to our credit. Thoughtless, unplanned, uncontrolled land use practices are costly to America, in terms of both economics and esthetics. These practices can no longer be ignored, and perhaps by the end of the 1970's no longer tolerated!



21. Americans still attempt to cultivate some land that is too steep and erosive--at least 50 million acres.
22. They still attempt to grow row crops on some land where frequent drought conditions present a high risk of crop failure and land damage.
23. They try to grow crops where wet conditions are equally troublesome.
24. They needlessly burn some forest land each year.
25. They concentrate livestock and send tons of animal waste into streams, adding to serious water pollution problems.
26. It doesn't have to be that way! The local people with whom SCS and other agencies work can testify that planned conservation practices--properly installed--greatly reduce erosion and pollution, and help assure good crops on agricultural land. Techniques are available to solve many environmental problems on farms.
27. Americans create unsightly scars on millions of acres of land through surface mining, polluting streams for miles around.
28. It doesn't have to be that way! Strip-mine spoils can be reclaimed and revegetated to serve multiple uses.
29. Americans discard 250 million tons of solid waste each year, mostly in open dumps in rural areas where the stuff pollutes air, water, and land.

30. It doesn't have to be that way! Solid waste can be disposed of safely in properly located and managed sanitary landfills that later can serve other beneficial uses.
31. Americans tear up the land for building, leave it bare for long periods, and let it produce sediment to mess up the site itself and land and water downstream. Sediment is America's heaviest-by-volume water pollutant, and a growing proportion of it is produced on urbanizing land.
32. Americans pave over large areas with no provision for managing storm water, and thus add significantly to flooding problems.
33. Half of the annual flood damage still is suffered in small upstream watersheds.
34. It doesn't have to be that way! Builders can find out about land suitability and land-use hazards before any construction is started...
35. And when things are torn up, sediment can be held on site in a temporary basin just like the ponds that farmers and ranchers have been using for decades. Some of these silt traps later become attractive lakes.



36. Structures can be built to help streams safely handle the vastly increased stormwater runoff that occurs when the land is paved over. Maryland has been a leader in storm water management as a part of sediment control programs.
37. Unplanned, checkerboard development too often squeezes the farmer until eventually someone makes him an offer that he can't refuse.
38. Here's a comparison between an area on Rock Creek in Maryland in 1937...
39. And the same area in 1957.
40. It doesn't have to be unplanned or checkerboard. Proper land use planning can help protect and develop natural resources in both rural and suburban areas. More and more people are beginning to demand some kind of sensible land use planning--and with the one-man-one-vote system in operation, they are likely to get what they want.
41. What they want is a high-quality environment where they vacation and where they live.
42. They want high-quality food, dependable in quantity and reasonably priced at the market place...
43. And that means that land use planning must first and adequately consider the needs of a high-quality sustained agriculture.

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44. They want space and facilities for a variety of recreation experiences.
45. They want space and habitat for fish and wildlife.
46. They want to protect and preserve shorelines on the oceans and the Great Lakes, along with other unique or critical environmental areas.
47. They want to preserve areas of historical importance. (Lincoln's boyhood cabin)
48. All these needs should be considered in setting national, state, and local land use policies and in making state land use plans. The individual and his community have much at stake.
49. The kind of land-use planning process needed is one that would seek and use natural resource inputs, recreation needs, population density and trends, economic factors, and related data.
50. Such a process would provide for all the technical and financial assistance available from the Federal government--and would blend Federal programs with State and local objectives.
51. A planning process would provide for interchange of data and ideas and training programs among agencies of all kinds--for example, useful new imagery from the Earth Resources Technology Satellite.

52. Such a process would call for exchanging information and ideas with the public, too--people will not support plans that they don't understand and that they had no hand in formulating.
53. States will need to consider in their planning process whether some of the land-use decisions that have always been totally private decisions in a free-market system with limited local overview...
54. May need a stronger overview in the form of regulation, control, legislative or State approval, or perhaps litigation.
55. The private landowner may need reminding that he has duties as well as rights in the matter of using and caring for the land and water resources he manages.
56. Above all, we must not forget that land use planning begins and ends with people. After all, land use planning is for people.
57. USDA is the people's department. We've been helping people manage their land better--and live better--for a long time.

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58. To outline USDA's interest and objectives in the land-use field, Secretary Butz last October issued a major policy statement. I'd like to discuss its major points.
59. The first four sections stress the responsibility that rests with State and local governments and landowners, and outline the Department's ability to exchange ideas through several thousand local offices.
60. The definition of land-use planning is most important. We're not talking simply about zoning, but rather "...the total of all those national, state, and local laws, ordinances, and attitudes affecting the short-term or long-term uses of land, private or public, through such mechanisms as ownership, inheritance, taxation, condemnation, zoning, redevelopment, building regulation, master planning and legislative fiat."
61. Several important policy decisions are listed in the next section of Secretary's Memorandum 1827.
62. For example, prime agricultural land is going to have more attention...
63. Water will be important...

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64. Conservation protection will be vital as America works to produce more food and fiber...
65. Facts will be vital in decision making...
66. Plants and animals will get high priority too...
67. And land use decisions relating to them.
68. The next section of Memorandum 1827 talks about the kinds of facts about land that USDA will work to get. For example...
69. A standard system...
70. Inventories and projections by county, state, region, and the nation.
71. What are the problems? Which wheel is squeaking the loudest?
72. What are the issues? And where is the physical, social, and economic information to help understand them and what to do about them? USDA will find out.
73. The next part of the memorandum lists some of the objectives that agencies will have in redirecting their activities and policies.
74. For example, soil survey facts faster, and other help to guide urban growth...
75. More attention to making land-use practices assets rather than liabilities to the environment...

76. More attention to compatible uses of land.
77. Finally, the memorandum lists several broad purposes to guide all our work, to improve resources and living standards for all Americans.
78. Conservation district leaders and USDA people together will need to exercise leadership in all of these actions to help make daily life better for people. That's the assignment we all have.
79. In the Soil Conservation Service, as one of the USDA agencies carrying out that assignment, we work through conservation districts to tell landowners and users about the technical information they need, where to get it, and how to use it in improving their land and their lives.

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TRAY

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80. We work with other State and Federal agencies to compile useful technical information, starting with soil surveys. Soil survey data now are available in some form for over half of the nation and nearly three-fourths of the areas where housing and industry are rapidly expanding.



81. We help make inventories of soil and water conservation needs, flood-hazard analyses, studies of recreation potential on private land, snow surveys, and others that provide useful facts.
82. SCS also carries out its assignment by helping local groups look at flood prevention and other needs in small watersheds. The more than 1,000 projects that have been approved for installation under Public Law 566 cover nearly 70 million acres. The completed structures and land treatment practices have significantly lowered upstream flood damages and improved the environment.
83. We work with other agencies in large river basin studies. Each one is different, but all will provide facts useful in identifying resource conditions and needs and in deciding on ways to improve resources for people.
84. We work with local organizations and other agencies in Resource Conservation and Development projects. There are nearly 150 of these multi-county efforts in which many interests are working together on environmental, social, and economic improvements.

85. All of these activities have as a central thread careful decisions about the use and management of land. The effects of planning and carrying out proper land use are widespread. For example:
86. In an Iowa community, population increased 35 percent in 10 years.
87. Iowa City's regional planning commission uses soils information as an aid in making land use decisions...
88. From where to put a new sanitary landfill where they can safely put the solid waste from 60,000 residents...
89. To locating critical sources of sediment in the area so they can encourage farmers to build terraces and ponds to keep sediment and other pollutants from reaching major lakes and rivers.
90. Shelby County, Alabama, is expected to double its population in the next 20 years, as people spill over from neighboring Birmingham.
91. But county officials plan to restrict development of land for housing and other needs on the basis of slope, water table, hard rock, and flood frequency.
92. Responsible builders in the area also consider environmental protection their business. They save large trees, sod the exposed land quickly, adapt other conservation practices.

93. In Birmingham, SCS helped develop an outdoor classroom at the new Huffman High School that is used by nearly every department in the school to relate textbooks to the real world.
  94. In Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, a new state law requires builders with tracts of 25 acres or more to make an erosion-control plan based on soils data before they move a spadeful of earth.
  95. An early cooperator was the Round Hill Farm, whose manager wanted to improve the farm without erosion, for greater enjoyment by the 300,000 people who visit this unusual kind of county park each year.
  96. Soils information is used throughout the county as an aid in locating sanitary landfill sites, school sites, and planning comprehensive sewer systems.
  97. There are many other examples of local and state governments beginning to find and use all the natural resource information they can get from USDA and others to incorporate in their planning process.
  98. They are increasing their financial inputs to get information and assistance more quickly--almost \$50 million was appropriated by State legislatures for conservation action in fiscal year 1974.
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99. Landowners and operators are investing heavily in conservation, too--several dollars for each dollar of governmental assistance programs.
100. As the amount of land Americans have per person continues to shrink--from 22 acres in 1920 to 11 acres today to perhaps 7 acres in the year 2000--we will all have to help find and advertise the kinds of information needed to make valid land-use decisions.
101. We will all have to help communities and governmental units have the discussions required to settle differences among interest groups over land-use patterns and levels of water development.
102. Finally, we will all have to help get the decisions made, the plans implemented, the land and other resources protected. The result can be the kind of America we want tomorrow.
103. There is a long way to go, and the clock is moving. The time for USDA employees to take a strong role in forming land use policy and aiding land-use choices is right now.

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This was a glimpse of the setting in which the wide range of land-use policy decisions are being made. I think that every Federal agency and department, every land-grant university, every governmental unit and every interested private organization ought to take a reading on what's coming, what's wanted, and what's needed.

All of us need to assess whether we're ready--that's been the function of USDA's land use committees and Secretary's Memorandum 1827. All of us need to get informed and help others in conservation districts, state boards or commissions, and other groups understand what's going on.

We in USDA have helped bring about land improvement, and changes in rural land use, to a degree almost beyond belief for voluntary, cooperative programs. Conservation plans cover nearly 600 million acres. More than 30 million acres have been shifted for conservation reasons to grassland, woodland, or use for wildlife and recreation.

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We've worked on other rural land use problems over the years with varying degrees of success...cycles of over-production...maladjustments in taxation and credit, with attendant rises in farm mortgage debts, tax delinquencies, bankruptcies, foreclosures...radical shifts in the geography of production, meaning large-scale abandonment of farmland in the East and creation of new cropland in the Plains, the Delta, and the Far West...and wholesale migration, especially of our young people, from farms and ranches to what they hoped would be greater opportunity in towns and cities.

There are two sides to the migration coin. On the one side, the tremendous capability of American agriculture to produce food and fiber has freed Americans to follow other pursuits, other careers. In no other country do so many eat so well from on-the-land efforts of such a small percentage of its population. Agriculture has freed Americans to take up 30,000 different occupations and perhaps as many avocations in pursuit of a better life. The result has been a tremendous industrial and commercial outpouring, as well as medical breakthroughs, trips to the moon, and new heights in music and many forms of art.



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On the other side, of course, migrations over decades have produced changing demands on the use of land, changes in the demand for community services, changes in the ability of a community to support those services. A society with 30,000 different occupations has given us at least that many different outlooks or interests in how natural resources ought to be used and managed, where highways or new churches or new schools ought to be located, and many other concerns. People are different. They have different desires and different needs. Consensus is increasingly difficult to achieve.

Another result of American progress has been a great increase in leisure time. Demand for land for recreation purposes has mushroomed. The most popular national parks have all the problems of a city--congestion, crime, pollution, and so on. Private land is increasingly being called on to fill the demand for recreation.

That's a tremendous opportunity for a new source of income for rural landowners, and it's an excellent chance to make multiple use of natural resources--farming and fun. USDA has been working with landowners to manage for recreation. But Americans in most cases haven't been willing to pay the full cost of providing the recreation service.

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In many cases they haven't been very good citizens when making use of another person's property. There are questions of liability and taxing procedures and others that haven't been fully answered.

A related demand has been the continuing increase in land purchase in rural areas by people from the city desiring second homes. An estimated 95,000 second homes were started in 1971--up from an average of 20,000 per year in the 1940's, 40,000 per year in the 1950's, and 75,000 per year in the 1960's. Second home starts are expected to reach 150,000 per year during the 1970's. Further, at least six recreational lots were sold in 1971 for each second home started. This may suggest purchases for speculative investment rather than as building sites to someday use and enjoy. It may further suggest differences in the care that is taken of the property involved. Absentee ownership is a very real problem in many States.

Other sources of conflict in rural areas are related to the increased awareness by most Americans of the importance of environmental improvement. Soil erosion, sedimentation, animal waste, and agricultural burning used to be accepted as the normal course of events. Today, people are becoming more aware that bad land-use practices damage air and water quality and harm the productivity of the land.

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People even in the most rural areas thus are less likely now to put up with these pollutants. In Iowa, a landowner can be stopped from exceeding soil-loss limits that his soil conservation district has set. Every state will be subject to standards for non-point-source pollution that are being developed by the Environmental Protection Agency in cooperation with USDA and other agencies.

These conflicts are small potatoes in comparison to the fringe areas around major cities and in heavily populated states where conflicts increase dramatically:

--Because of differing ideas and pressures on how land should be used, and

--Because thoughtless, unplanned, uncontrolled land practices have created visible and extensive damage to the environment and the landscape.

The primary demand in the urban fringe has been for places to live. Housing subdivisions have grown up everywhere to try and meet that demand. In New Jersey, for example, the number of housing units went up 20 percent in the 1960's--and it wasn't enough. Demand for housing is still high. Prices therefore are high, making it difficult for low-or even middle-income people to buy new homes and upgrade their living conditions.

All over America, subdivisions and shopping centers and community services have spread out across adjacent counties, often leapfrogging over agricultural land and creating helter-skelter communities that are difficult to service effectively. Urbanization has spread out into counties whose zoning laws or other land-use plans and policies either did not exist or were not prepared for the onslaught. Too many decisions were made considering land not as a variable, damageable resource but as a standard commodity to be traded at will for dollars or political favors.

Zoning laws and other policies have varied greatly within states, each community proud of its own ideas and goals. With tax structure often heavily weighted toward property tax revenue, communities have been strongly motivated to attract "ratables"--industry. When industry and people arrive, more services have to be provided. More problems arise. More conflicts occur in the use of land. Where zoning has been exclusionary, requirements for extra large lots have tended to waste land and have driven prices up.

Across America, growth happened before communities were ready for it, before they had figured out what resources they had and how they wanted them used and managed. The result has been significant loss of natural resources, many of them irretrievable.

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For example, between 1954 and 1964 Long Island in New York lost 29 percent of its coastal wetlands. Wetlands mean different things to different people. Some see marshes as areas to be bought cheap and filled in or drained to make "good", profitable land for development. Others see the marshes as vital for fish and shellfish spawning, for recycling of secondary wastes, for flood control, for natural beauty. One group at Louisiana State University has calculated that marsh lands along the Gulf and South Atlantic shores are worth \$83,000 an acre.

Another ready source of conflict is good agricultural land--level, well drained, with few if any soil problems. The same characteristics that make it choice for farmland may also make it highly desirable for urban uses because construction costs are lower. Should the best land be reserved for agriculture and houses be put on the less desirable land, thus increasing the cost of housing still further with no penalty to the farmer? Or should the demand for housing take precedence and farmers try to maintain crop quality and yields on the poorer land that may have conservation hazards as well as being more difficult to work with machinery--with no penalty to the homebuyer except perhaps higher prices for hard tomatoes?

A difficult question to answer is: How much prime agricultural land do we need? On a nationwide basis, we still have plenty of good land. We're producing record crops while converting up to a million acres a year to urban uses. But--some crops require specific soil and climatic conditions that can't readily be duplicated elsewhere. Orange country...grape country...avocado country...cranberry country. Once that land is gone, it's gone. Further, some of the prime land is in small scattered parcels that are not economical to farm with today's machinery.

Farmers don't like the high land costs, high labor costs and high property taxes that go along with creeping urbanization. Many farmers have been forced or enticed to sell out and move on.

The transition to urban uses in many cases is itself contributory to environmental damage, as I pointed out with the slides:

--Through sediment pollution caused by tearing up large tracts and leaving them exposed to the threat of soil erosion for long periods of time, and

--Through paving over much of the land without considering the likely effect on stormwater runoff, the water table, stability of stream rights-of-way, and the like.



Many states are developing laws and programs to deal with sediment and stormwater management problems from urban construction as well as from other sources. Conservation districts are assisting in review of developers' plans in many counties. Of course, sediment control and stormwater management measures are a new way of doing business for developers, and they do cost money--another source of conflict between builders and public agencies.

It will not be easy to find solutions to all these questions and conflicts in land use. Some big decisions are going to have to be made. Who will make the decisions? On what will they be based? How much control will be needed? Exercised by whom? Over what land uses?

There is national land-use policy legislation at the U.S. Congress. The Senate passed a bill last summer that had been introduced first in 1971. The companion bill in the House is still awaiting a rule so it can be discussed on the floor. The House committee held further hearings on the bill late last month, and heard dozens of witnesses. Many people are urging that hearings be held around the country--to get more two-way communication on what's wanted and what's needed and what's intended before the final bill is marked up. Meantime, another House bill has been introduced on the same subject.

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The legislation basically would set up a new Interior Department office offering \$100 million a year for eight years to states agreeing to draw up and implement statewide land use plans in accordance with Federal guidelines.

The States would need a planning process that covers many of the bases that I discussed with slides--cranking in natural resource facts; coordinating program efforts among all levels of government; and the like.

One fundamental issue related to the present bills has to do with property rights. We have a long tradition of absolute land ownership. That tradition is being tested, shot through, eroded (depending on whom you ask) by economic forces and social pressures and courts of justice. Proponents of the land-use bills maintain that the bills do not alter property rights, but in fact reiterate the Constitutional protection against taking of property without compensation. Opponents of the bills argue that the standards, guidelines, rules and regulations portend an unprecedented extension of Federal authority into the use and management of private property.

In terms of state's rights, those in favor of the bills maintain that nothing in the bills would diminish or jeopardize state rights.

Opponents argue that the bills would impose more and more controls on states and encroach on their police powers--or force them to use police powers to restrict or ban developments in designated areas of "critical environmental importance."

In terms of growth or no growth, proponents of the bills believe that the bills would facilitate orderly, planned growth. Others are afraid the provisions of the bills or the language in them would be construed to hinder land development too much.

Whatever the merits or demerits of the bills, whatever the need for further hearings or committee discussions, chances are that some form of national land use policy legislation will pass the Congress--if not this year, then in the next year or so.

Other Federal legislation has been introduced or enacted recently that will impact on land use policies. The Coastal Zone Management Act is law, and some funding is already going out to the States. Some of those allocations are pretty substantial. Bills to aid in reclaiming surface-mined lands and control future mining are being discussed.

A lot of specific state legislation regarding land-use policy is in effect or on the way. More will be needed to resolve some of America's land-use conflicts.

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Most land use decisions, however, will still be made at the local level. It will be up to communities to decide for themselves what their resources are and what they want to do with them. This means two very important items will be needed:

--Facts about the natural resource base, such as soil surveys, inventories of soil and water conservation needs, geologic data, and a host of other kinds of information; and

--A way of finding out what the people in a community really want for their future. Increased public participation and increased public awareness will be the key.

Governmental units will have to allow as many people possible to express their views and goals, and then try to determine what is the best total interest of the community, in a planning process that has some flexibility in it. No one will get everything he wants--there will have to be some tradeoffs.

But America does have enough land for all uses for all citizens and a high-quality environment--if a planning process is developed and used at all levels of government, and if each landowner accepts responsibilities as well as rights in the land resource he manages. Your assistance will be vital.

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Jan 28/74

## LAND USE

(From January 28 New Jersey speech)

In every state I've visited in recent years, land use is one of the prime problems and the subject of much discussion and proposals and legislation.

Professor Raymond Vlasin of Michigan State University characterized his state's land use problems this way:

"First, they are urgent. The incidence of land use problems and the conflicts arising from them appear to be growing in number and severity.

"Second, land use problems are broadly pervasive. They affect both metropolitan and nonmetropolitan areas. They affect all manner of public agencies, private groups, citizen groups, and charitable and religious groups. They affect all manner of persons involved in the production, processing, and consumption of goods and services from land.

"Third, the problems are complex and interrelated. Urban, suburban, exurban, and rural problems are intricately interrelated. Some of the most crushing problems arise from the complex of metropolitan area demands on nonmetropolitan regions and communities. Metropolitan areas look to nonmetropolitan areas for waste disposal, housing, industrial location, utility corridors, transportation, power generation, water supplies, recreation, and second homes in rural environments. Many of the difficult problems arise at the interface between urban use expansion and adjacent rural uses impacted by that expansion. Other problems arise from urban demands or urban developments that "leapfrog" great distances into rural areas.

"Fourth, the land use problems are statewide. No area of the State is free of them. All areas experience one or more major land use problems."

Doesn't this characterization fit New Jersey as well?

Our partnership with conservation districts has resulted in land improvement, and changes in rural land use, to a degree almost beyond belief for a voluntary, cooperative program. Conservation plans cover nearly 600 million acres. More than 30 million acres have been shifted for conservation reasons to grassland, woodland, or use for wildlife and recreation.

But we have not solved all the rural land use problems with these efforts. Other concerns have been voiced over the years...cycles of overproduction...maladjustments in taxation and credit, with attendant rises in farm mortgage debts, tax delinquencies, bankruptcies, foreclosures...radical shifts in the geography of production, meaning large-scale abandonment of farmland in the East and creation of new cropland in the Plains, the Delta, and the Far West...and wholesale migration, especially of our young people, from farms and ranches to what they hoped would be greater opportunity in towns and cities.

There are two sides to the migration coin. On the one side, the tremendous capability of American agriculture to produce food and fiber has freed Americans to follow other pursuits, other careers. In no other country do so many eat so well from on-the-land efforts of such a small percentage of its population. Agriculture has freed Americans to take up 30,000 different occupations and perhaps as many avocations in pursuit of a better life. The result has been the tremendous industrial and commercial



outpouring to which New Jersey also contributes strongly. Ninety of the top 100 industries in the nation have facilities in New Jersey. We have all seen other results in medical breakthroughs and trips to the moon and new heights in music and many forms of art.

On the other side, of course, migrations over decades have produced changing demands on the use of land, changes in the demand for community services, changes in the ability of a community to support these services. A society with 30,000 different occupations has given us at least that many different outlooks or interests in how natural resources ought to be used and managed, where highways or new churches or new schools ought to be located, and many other concerns. People are different. They have different desires and different needs. Consensus is increasingly difficult to achieve.

Another result of American progress has been a great increase in leisure time. Demand for land for recreation purposes has mushroomed. The most popular national parks have all the problems of a city--congestion, crime, pollution, and so on. Private land is increasingly being called on to fill the demand for recreation.

That's a tremendous opportunity for a new source of income for rural landowners, and it's an excellent chance to make multiple use of natural resources -- farming and fun. USDA has been working with landowners to manage for recreation. But Americans in most cases haven't been willing to pay the full cost of providing the recreation service. In many cases they haven't been very good citizens when making use of another person's property. There are questions of liability and taxing procedures and others that haven't been fully answered.

A related demand has been the continuing increase in land purchase in rural areas by people from the city desiring second homes. An estimated 95,000 second homes were started in 1971 -- up from an average of 20,000 per year in the 1940's, 40,000 per year in the 1950's, and 75,000 per year in the 1960's. Second home starts are expected to reach 150,000 per year during the 1970's. Further, at least six recreational lots were sold in 1971 for each second home started. This may suggest purchases for speculative investment rather than as building sites to someday use and enjoy. It may further suggest differences in the care that is taken of the property involved. Absentee ownership is a very real problem in many States.

Other sources of conflict in rural areas are related to the increased awareness by most Americans of the importance of environmental improvement. Soil erosion, sedimentation, animal waste, and agricultural burning used to be accepted as the normal course of events. Today, people are becoming more aware that bad land-use practices damage air and water quality and harm the productivity of the land. People even in the most rural areas thus are less likely now to put up with these pollutants. In Iowa, a landowner can be stopped from exceeding soil-loss limits that his soil conservation district has set. Every state will be subject to standards for non-point-source pollution that are being developed by the Environmental Protection Agency in cooperation with USDA and other agencies.

These conflicts are small potatoes in comparison to the fringe areas around major cities and in populous states like New Jersey, where conflicts increase dramatically:

--Because of differing ideas and pressures on how land should be used, and

--Because thoughtless, unplanned, uncontrolled land use practices have created visible and extensive damage to the environment and the landscape.

The primary demand in the urban fringe has been for places to live. Housing subdivisions have grown up everywhere to try and meet that demand. In New Jersey, the number of housing units went up 20 percent in the 1960's--and it wasn't enough. Demand for housing is still high. Prices therefore are high, making it difficult for low-or even middle-income people to buy new homes and upgrade their living conditions.

All over America, subdivisions and shopping centers and community services have spread out across adjacent counties, often leapfrogging over agricultural land and creating helter-skelter communities that are difficult to service effectively. Urbanization has spread out into counties whose zoning laws or other land-use plans and policies either did not exist or were not prepared for the onslaught. Too many decisions to develop land were made outside the public forum. Too many decisions were made considering land not as a variable, damageable resource but as a standard commodity to be traded at will for dollars or political favors.

In New Jersey, land-use policies such as zoning have varied greatly among your 567 municipalities, each proud of its own ideas and goals, its home rule. With a tax structure based on property, many municipalities have been strongly motivated to attempt to attract "ratables" -- industry. When industry and people arrive, more services have to be provided. More

problems arise. More conflict in the use of land. In some municipalities zoning has been exclusionary; requirements for extra large lots have tended to waste land and have driven prices up.

Across America, growth happened before communities were ready for it, before they had figured out what resources they had and how they wanted them used and managed. The result has been significant loss of natural resources, many of them irretrievable. For example, between 1954 and 1964 Long Island in New York lost 29 percent of its coastal wetlands. Wetlands mean different things to different people. Some see marshes as areas to be bought cheap and filled in or drained to make "good", profitable land for development. Others see the marshes as vital for fish and shellfish spawning, for recycling or secondary wastes, for flood control, for natural beauty. One group at Louisiana State University has calculated that marsh lands along the Gulf and South Atlantic shores are worth \$83,000 an acre.

Another ready source of conflict is good agricultural land -- level, well drained, with few if any soil problems. The same characteristics that make it choice for farmland may also make it highly desirable for urban uses because construction costs are lower. Should the best land be reserved for agriculture and houses be put on the less desirable land, thus increasing the cost of housing still further with no penalty to the farmer? Or should the demand for housing take precedence and farmers try to maintain crop quality and yields on the poorer land that may have conservation hazards as well as being more difficult to work with machinery --

with no penalty to the homebuyer except perhaps higher prices for hard tomatoes?

A difficult question to answer is: How much prime agricultural land do we need? On a nationwide basis, we still have plenty of good land. We're producing record crops while converting up to a million acres a year to urban uses. But -- some crops require specific soil and climatic conditions that can't readily be duplicated elsewhere. Orange country... grape country...avocado country...cranberry country. Once that land is gone, it's gone. Further, some of the prime land is in small scattered parcels that are not economical to farm with today's machinery.

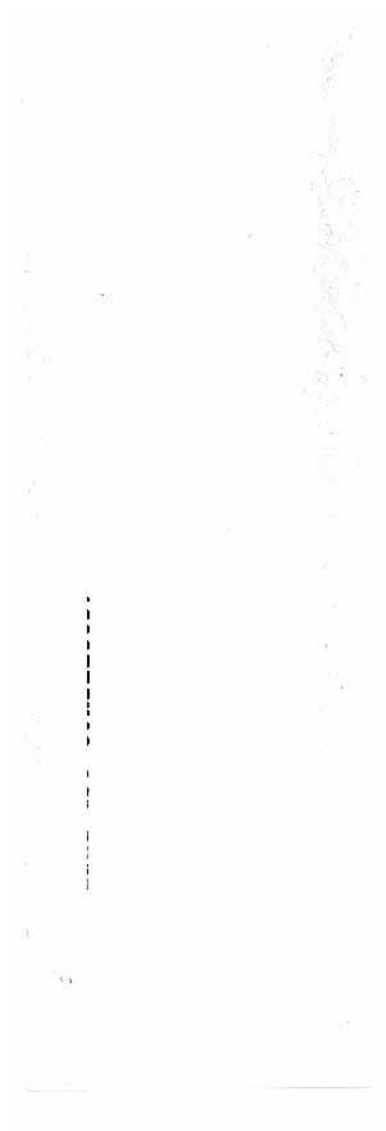
Farmers don't like the high land costs, high labor costs and high property taxes that go along with creeping urbanization. Many farmers have been forced or enticed to sell out and move on.

The transition to urban uses in many cases is itself contributory to environmental damage, mainly:

--Through sediment pollution caused by tearing up large tracts and leaving them exposed to the threat of soil erosion for long periods of time, and

--Through paving over much of the land without considering the likely effect on stormwater runoff, the water table, stability of stream rights-of-way, and the like.

Many states including New Jersey are developing laws and programs to deal with sediment and stormwater management problems from urban construction as well as from other sources. Conservation districts are assisting in review of developers' plans in many counties. Of course,



Most land use decisions, however, will still be made at the local level. It will be up to communities to decide for themselves what their resources are and what they want to do with them. This means two very important items will be needed:

--Facts about the natural resource base, such as soil surveys, inventories of soil and water conservation needs, geologic data, and a host of other kinds of information; and

--A way of finding out what the people in a community really want for their future. Increased public participation and increased public awareness will be the key.

Governmental units will have to allow as many people possible to express their views and goals, and then try to determine what is the best total interest of the community, in a planning process that has some flexibility in it. No one will get everything he wants -- there will have to be some tradeoffs.

But America does have enough land for all uses for all citizens and a high-quality environment -- if a planning process is developed and used at all levels of government, and if each landowner accepts responsibilities as well as rights in the land resource he manages. There is room -- and need -- for more urban growth, even in New Jersey.