

FRAMEWORK FOR TOMORROW

These are exciting times for people and organizations who make resource improvement their business. I welcome this opportunity to join you.

I appreciate, too, this chance to return to South Dakota, where I had the pleasure of serving as assistant State conservationist for the Soil Conservation Service for four years.

I'd like to talk with you about the water-resource activities of the SCS, to tie those activities to the broader role that SCS has in working with local people and other agencies, and then try and set a broader context for the work at which we all are busy.

You have had some discussion already about the small watershed program under Public Law 566, its experience and its future needs. I just want to recognize that local people working together on mutual flooding problems have found in the watershed program a way to meet more positive aims as well, and South Dakotans are having some impressive results.

Material for talk by Norman A. Berg, Associate Administrator Soil Conservation Service, at the South Dakota Water Development Association annual meeting, Sioux Falls, S. Dak., October 9, 1970.

On the one hand, following the record-high snowmelt in spring 1969, three watershed projects together prevented a total of more than \$110,000 in flood damages. Nationally, watershed projects installed since the program began 16 years ago have prevented an estimated \$180 million in flood damages.

On the other hand, watershed projects so far have added nearly a thousand surface acres of water area to the State of South Dakota. The first multiple-purpose structure in the State, Lake Lakota, is doing a land-office business in recreation. And wildlife is getting a boost through watershed projects. SCS works closely with the South Dakota State Game, Fish and Parks Commission and the USDI Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife in making watershed projects have the most favorable impact possible on fish and wildlife resources.

We have joint meetings with these agencies during the planning stages, and our biologists make joint field surveys to find present wildlife conditions, probable effects of construction work and alternatives, and--most important--opportunities to take positive steps to enhance wildlife habitat through watershed action.

To sum up, watershed projects are an excellent way for communities to get wildlife and recreation improvements, new water supplies for many uses, and improved land use that further protects the water resource. Our National Inventory of Soil and Water Conservation Needs indicates there are some 205 potential watershed projects in South Dakota. There are just 10 in operation, and another 27 in earlier stages of preparation or inactive. This suggests both the size of the job ahead and the opportunity ahead.

SCS is involved in a River Basin Study on the Big Sioux, and we finished the James River study back in 1966. Another study on the West River Basin will be underway in the next year or so. These studies, made cooperatively by several agencies, help to outline the program needs for water and related land resources in a basin, and provide a good base or framework for community planning.

Water resource improvement is an important part of Resource Conservation and Development projects under the Food and Agriculture Act of 1962. There are two RC&D projects in South Dakota, the Randall and the Black Hills projects, and an application is in for a third project covering parts of South Dakota and Minnesota. The Randall project has requested expansion to more than double its size, and I hope that approval will be coming in a matter of weeks from Secretary Hardin. These projects tie in the improvement of natural resources with social and economic needs to really focus attention on a community's needs and desires for development. There are 68 RC&D projects across the country now, and they are both active and popular. I think it's interesting that the projects in South Dakota together take up 80 percent of the state! So they'll have some direct impact on most of you. And perhaps you can help make the projects or individual action measures more effective.

The Great Plains Conservation Program also has a role in water conservation in South Dakota. In this program, just recently extended by Congress until 1981, the Department of Agriculture has contracts with nearly 2,000 landowners to protect natural resources and make agriculture stable in the tricky climatic conditions of the Plains. One of the prime practices in the program in South Dakota is the development of livestock water facilities for individual landowners, groups, or whole communities. Last year alone 337 stockponds were built, and 55 wells were dug, and a third of a million feet of pipelines was installed.

Other practices on the land in Great Plains counties help with both quantity and quality problems in water supply. Incidentally, the Act that extended the program also broadened its scope to do a better job in the area of pollution control.

I've discussed now several of the project-type activities of the Soil Conservation Service in South Dakota. All of these grew out of the experience and the success of conservation work done in local soil and water conservation districts, and the work that SCS does in helping these districts still is the backbone of our assignment.

In South Dakota's 70 soil and water conservation districts, SCS has helped install conservation cropping systems on nearly 11 million acres; contour farming on over 600,000 acres; stripcropping on over a million acres; 8,000 miles of terraces and another 1,000 miles of diversions; and more than 90,000 ponds and nearly 1,000 grade-stabilization structures. All these practices serve to improve water quality and quantity as well as conserve the land resources. And they've added 280,000 surface acres of water area to South Dakota.

We've helped with irrigation water management on nearly 100,000 acres, and helped install nearly 900 improved irrigation systems.

Other big conservation practices in this state include nearly 11 million acres of crop-residue use, proper grazing on $17\frac{1}{2}$ million acres, wildlife management on 299,000 acres, and tree planting on over 250,000 acres.

These are a lot of figures, but I wanted to give you an idea of the scope of SCS and district work in your State, all of it having an impact on water and related land resources. And all of it helpful in making people live better and live in a better environment.

The districts in South Dakota have been at work expanding their activities to serve the widening interests of the rural community. In addition to farmers and ranchers, they now work with local governments, school boards, planning commissions, conservation groups, urban planners, highway engineers, and residents to make land use and treatment decisions.

This has been a vital step for districts to do a better job, because the 1970 census figures show that well over half of South Dakota's more than 660,000 residents live in towns and cities and rural villages rather than on farm and ranch units.

The Soil Conservation Service and the entire U.S. Department of Agriculture also have been of increasing helpfulness to citizens and governments beyond farm boundaries. The programs I've already capsuled involve both rural and urban people and concerns. Another example is the soil survey, which has been completed on more than 21 million acres in South Dakota. SCS and your State University have worked with the Department of Revenue to develop data and procedures for use of soil information in land appraisal and assessment. Planning commissions in five major cities have requested or are using information about soil suitability for many uses. The State Highway Department and SCS are pooling soil test results and survey information for use in highway construction.

All in all, SCS and other USDA agencies have quite a bit to offer in helping communities and landowners plot a course for tomorrow, in the way of basic facts about land and water, technical and financial help, and a comprehensive conservation research program.

Last week I sat in on part of the meeting of the Public Advisory Committee on Soil and Water Conservation. This is a group of citizens appointed by the Secretary of Agriculture to advise him on ways to strengthen our Department's conservation efforts. The members had some specific concerns and suggestions, but in general they gave an encouraging vote of confidence to the USDA for the way that its programs contribute to improvement of our environment. They particularly pointed out the value of the Resource Conservation and Development project approach to helping rural communities achieve better resources and living conditions. In fact, the committee expressed concern that millions of Americans who need USDA's conservation assistance and who must help support it do not know of its availability.

We're working on a stepped-up public information effort, to be sure; but the real challenge is on those who work with us at the community level to let citizens and governments know about all the programs that can be of help, whether it be USDA or HUD or USDI or the Corps of Engineers or any of the more than 1,000 Federal programs.

This is the approach of the Resource Conservation and Development project--finding out what an area needs in the way of resource improvement and what its citizens want in the way of social and economic goals, and then helping the local people find the sources of help in reaching their local goals. It works.

The SCS is a source of information from systematic studies of many kinds:

- Conservation Needs Inventory

- Recreation Potential Inventory

- Critical Sediment Sources

- Surveys for water impoundments, waste disposal, and

specialty crops

- Plant studies

- Roadside erosion surveys

- Streambank and shore stability surveys

--Snow surveys for western water yields

--Surveys for river basin planning, and others.

SCS is a source of program help in the areas I outlined earlier. The Forest Service, Farmers Home Administration, Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service, Agricultural Research Service, and others have USDA programs that can help.

The Corps and the Bureau of Reclamation and the Fish and Wildlife Service...and many others are in position to aid local people and state governments in both planning and action for improving resources and the ultimate goal of making better places for people to live.

We are at different jobs, at different times. But we must be at the same work together. As Under Secretary of Agriculture Phil Campbell said in an Iowa meeting recently:

"The development plan for any given watershed, district, or RC&D project ((or any other area)) must take into account the widest possible range of questions, the pros and cons, the goals and the right and wrong ways of achieving those goals. If it's a question of water, for example, we need to consider not just how water itself will be conserved, utilized and its quality improved, but the best use of land, establishment of better cover, enhancement of wildlife, recreation potentials, and economic gains in terms of rural nonfarm job opportunities in addition to the improvement of farm income. This is the integrated approach--and it makes sense."

We mastered the art of soil and water conservation decades ago--yet we are still learning, and the job is fast changing. With the Corps of Engineers and the Bureau of Reclamation and others, we learned the art of working together long ago--but we are still learning, and the job is fast changing.

As this Nation continues to grow in population and to change its land use and its transportation systems and its productive capacity and its residential patterns to match, it becomes increasingly clear that all agencies and all special-interest groups and all citizens must coordinate their aims and their efforts.

In much of America, people are too close together now to permit each to do his own thing. To put it another way, your right to carelessly swing your arm ends where your neighbor's nose begins.

Water affects every one of us. We all drink it, eat the food it helps produce, use the goods it helps manufacture. We swim in it, get sick when it's polluted, and pay taxes--most of us--to clean it up. So when we talk water management or water resource development, keep in mind that advocates of all the many water uses must be heard from in the planning process to assure that the development has the impact intended, at the lowest cost. The chance to be heard from is a major attraction of the small watershed program, because diverse interest groups can blend their talents and their aims at meetings and at all levels of government. Out of this comes an increasingly broad-based program.

Participation by all interest groups doesn't mean that everyone will be satisfied with the end result. Choices must be made, priorities assigned, and not all of them clear-cut or obvious. As Americans continue to develop their land and water resources in the decades ahead, the possibility of conflict in resource aims will increase. But we can work together to minimize conflicts.

Above all, I think we have an opportunity in the decades ahead to help each other and local communities to act on positive land and water goals and quit reacting to crises or problems.

I think that is the thrust that your program committee had in mind when it set up this panel discussion on "Working Together For Total Development."

We can get off of the catch-up and patch-up phases of resource action and move ahead positively. As President Nixon said in transmitting the first report of the Council on Environmental Quality:

"Our environmental problems are very serious, indeed urgent, but they do not justify either panic or hysteria. The problems are highly complex, and their resolution will require rational, systematic approaches, hard work and patience. There must be a national commitment and a rational commitment...We should set ourselves a higher goal than merely remedying the damage wrought in decades past. We should strive for an environment that not only sustains life but enriches life, harmonizing the works of man and nature for the greater good of all."

Building the kind of environment that will enrich life is going to take a different approach to the patterns of population growth. It will mean, rather than cramming more millions of people into existing metropolitan centers, finding ways to accommodate more people in new and old communities in rural America.

And this means water development, land-use planning, economic decision-making, and a host of other inputs. All these developments must be smoothly carried out in rural America to preserve the qualities that make rural America inviting.

In the action that must be carried out, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and conservation districts have a lot of experience and information to offer. They have broad responsibilities. So do most of you in this room. Let's all work together toward a "total development" that is worth having.

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