

FULL PARTNERS AT WORK

Govt & ^{Fed} State ^{local}

Private industry

Congress - Law & \$
Exec - Admin.
Judicial - Decisions - legal

Cong. Sen. D. Perkins
N. S.
Carson

I'm glad for the chance to again return to South

Dakota and to this watershed. It occupied a lot of my time

and thought in the late 1950's.

Ray Hurstables

Ross Davis

When I came to work in South Dakota in September

1956 from Idaho as the assistant state conservationist in

charge of small watershed projects and other activities,

you people in the Silver Creek area and their Minnehaha

Conservation District were in the final stages of helping

SCS plan and schedule the needed work.

Material for talk by Norman A. Berg, Associate Administrator, Soil Conservation Service, at the dedication of the Silver Creek watershed project, Sioux Falls, South Dakota, September 5, 1974.

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I recall arranging for a silver cover for the project plan and -- after ^{B.E.L.} W. E. Holiway, Glenn Schrader, Justin Mortvedt, and Norman Nielsen had signed their approval of the decisions in the document -- sending the plan on its way for an okay from Washington.

Of course we couldn't foresee several things 18 years ago:

-- That now the ^{small} watershed program, such as you helped begin right here, is a strong, nationwide effort that has prevented \$316 million in flood damages, kept 18 million tons of sediment out of streams, and provided new water supplies, new recreation, new wildlife habitat, and new hope for hundreds of U.S. rural communities such as Renner and Sioux Falls.

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--Little did I know that I would now be in the position of Gladwin Young, who as Associate Administrator signed the Silver Creek watershed plan on March 12, 1957. My experience with the Watershed and Great Plains Conservation Programs -- both then brand new -- helped prepare me for my later Washington assignments. My work with the fine people of South Dakota was the most valuable experience. You made me and my family feel at home.

--And, third we couldn't have foreseen in 1956 that the Silver Creek watershed work plan would require crossing out the part that said we would get all the planned work done on the project in five fiscal years.

Obviously, it has taken a lot longer. It has taken more money, too -- the (installation) cost has more than doubled since the original estimates. I know you have needed a great

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You have used the time to good advantage -- installing more than three-fourths of the conservation measures on the land needed to help the six dams do their job. This will keep them from filling with sediment. You have done more than half of the needed conservation work in other areas of the watershed that do not drain into the structures. You formed a Watershed District in 1957 to take care of the local legal responsibilities for the dams and for the Silver Creek channel.

Doug. Carl, Vince Paul
The SCS people [^]who work with you in South Dakota have displayed a lot of dedication, too, in waiting for needed approvals and budget allotments and personnel ceilings so they could move this important activity ahead.

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You and Districts and SCS have displayed perserverance in adapting to some of the other reasons for delay in getting things done -- changes in how water resource agencies now have to do business; changes in engineering standards; changes in the way costs and benefits are evaluated; changes in the aims of the American public, government units and private organizations that serve the public and interest groups.

Many of these changes will result in better watershed projects. Others may help improve some projects in meeting the public interest. Some ^{changes} will simply delay projects and make their procedures and criteria unnecessarily complicated and costly.

I hope that in your case the complications that have come along have simply delayed your progress. You ^{still} have almost totally an agricultural watershed, even if it is in South

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Basic
You haven't changed ^{land} use very much since the project idea

first came into being, except for converting about a thousand
acres of cropland to grassland use. *& the conservation treatment* I don't believe you will

want to change land use very much in the years ahead. You

want to continue adding to America's agricultural capability,

and you'd ~~just as soon~~ *deserve to* improve your ability to make a living

at it. We hope flood protection will help accomplish that.

we can't control drought, frost, prices but we can do what
In 1956, the watershed work plan stated:

"One-fourth of the area in the Silver Creek Watershed is subject to floodwater damages. The balance of the watershed is upland which is subject to soil erosion. To improve this situation, a plan has been developed which includes three types of improvements. These consist of:

- (a) land treatment measures for watershed protection,
- (b) floodwater retarding structures, and
- (c) channel improvement."

"...The principal floodwater damages...are to crops and pastures. There are 5,061 acres subject to flooding annually...The sediment rate from the uplands is high.

"When the planned program is in effect, average annual damages will be reduced (nine-tenths -- from *will be reduced*

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"Approximately 76 percent of the (20,660 acres) is in cropland, about 16 percent grassland...Farms averaged about 175 acres...70 percent locally owned. The principal crop is corn...Soybeans, flax, feed crops (and oats - brome alfalfa are raised). Nearly every farm has some livestock...(The economy of the watershed is dependent mainly on cash grain and livestock.)"

In 1956, the Nation was coping with surplus agricultural production. The Soil Bank was getting under way. This ^{agr.} abundance problem ^{w/ too low farm income} persisted throughout the sixties. But in the mid-seventies the highest priority for use of our Nation's land and water is all-out food and fiber production --while at the same time protecting those resources for future demands.

Therefore, you were very farsighted in your planning and follow-up to correct your problems of long standing. The Nation and the world need your agricultural and food capability at full potential. Some of our citizens have not been that visionary.

rapidly. In these situations, the people's aims for different.

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There is conflict over what's important--economic growth, a good water supply, wildlife, open space, more homes and shopping facilities.

In many of these watersheds, local people have been able to use the watershed planning process to blend these different initiatives. They come out with a mix of watershed actions that do meet the overall interest of the public quite well. That's been the history and the forte of the small watershed program.

As American society has changed, as people's needs and interests have changed, the watershed program is flexible enough to accommodate the various and increasingly conflicting objectives and concerns with which projects are confronted. We've had to work harder to strike a balance. I think we've done a good job.

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Conflicts throughout the United States over the activities of many programs, people, and organizations--heightened by a growing interest in environmental quality--led the U.S. in 1970 to the National Environmental Policy Act.

NEPA and the required environmental impact statements have had a major effect on projects of every agency involved in land and water resources. SCS was monitoring and updating and strengthening the watershed planning process long before NEPA came along--but the requirements under NEPA guided those changes and got them into the handbooks that guide our field people. NEPA helped local people broaden their vision and find ways to get more out of a particular watershed project.

NEPA and the environmental impact statements had

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In the years that it took to relate the new procedures to our kind of Federally-assisted activity, to make them a part of the overall planning process rather than an add-on of extra series of steps, and to fully meet the intent of the Act, the already serious backlog in watershed planning increased.

Delays created another problem that has to do with honoring promises or commitments already made to local communities. In many cases, including Silver Creek, the SCS had to back up in an already going project and go through a detailed process of preparing an environmental impact statement that is as thick as the original watershed plan itself, send it to many agencies for review, consider their comments, and then submit the final statement before we could move ahead.

It is difficult when new circumstances are

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People tend to lose confidence in agencies of government and may lose interest in meeting their own commitments in a water-resource activity. We have tried to balance these new directions imposed by laws and regulations with the legal agreements already made with local people.

Since the advent of NEPA, court action has increased, too, along with new attention to watershed projects by a wide range of organizations and news media. In some cases, problems have been resolved and projects have moved ahead with modifications or new understanding or both. In other cases, projects have been stopped for further study of potential impacts, alternatives, and benefit or cost factors.

We will continue to work in watershed projects and all our other activities to uncover disagreement early, get it discussed and understood, and hopefully resolved, and

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Other developments in the last few years that have introduced extra procedures in watershed projects are laws to:

- Insure compliance of all Federally-assisted projects with provisions of the Civil Rights Act of 1964;
- Insure equitable consideration and help to people whose homes, businesses, or rights-of-way would have to be relocated to make way for watershed or other project structural measures;
- Insure protection of historical or archaeological sites;
- Insure protection of habitat for rare and endangered plant and animal species; and to
- Call for consideration of non-structural alternatives to achieve watershed aims -- such as zoning of

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Last September, the Water Resources Council published a new set of Principles and Standards for Planning Water and Related Land Resources. These new guides will also have significant effects on the small watershed program. A new higher interest rate to be used in figuring project costs over time will mean that some projects that local people feel are needed may not now be feasible. There's a new multi-objective approach to water development instead of the former reliance on economic analysis in figuring project benefits. We welcome this--environment quality deserves equal consideration. The Principles and Standards also give agencies a little leeway in analyzing regional development and impacts. We feel those should be included in the planning process in order to meet rural development needs. There is some latitude, too, in applying the standards

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--But the Principles and Standards do further complicate the process and may slow it down further.

As I said earlier, delay isn't all bad. In many cases, better plans and projects do result. Even if they do cost more, the end results may prove to be worth it. We hope!

In the Silver Creek watershed project, I think it is to your credit that even as early as 1956 we involved several agencies along with the Minnehaha district in deciding how to carry out the project. Wildlife agencies then decided that the works of improvement would have no material influence on wildlife and thus took no exception to the plans as they progressed.

Later on, we amended the plan to fit better the work being done on the Big Sioux River around Sioux Falls by the

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And in 1972 we sat down with the wildlife agencies again to carefully go over the planned channel improvement work to make certain it would have the best possible effect on wildlife habitat.

There is no question that the techniques we now use to accomplish channel improvement work and to evaluate the water runoff patterns and the benefits are quite different than in 1956. Had the original time schedule been met here, Silver Creek may well have done just as good a job in removing potential floodwaters as we hope it will do now.

But the channel would have been straighter, more trees would have been removed, the digging would have been done from both sides, the disturbed area would have been much wider, and so on.

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The work being done on Silver Creek now is, I believe, an excellent example of channel modification that can help the floodwater-retarding dams do their job and serve the other needs of people and wildlife at the same time. We are helping turn a clogged and at some points non-existent stream channel into an "environmental corridor" that will be an asset instead of a liability to the watershed and you who live in it.

We have taken special care to:

- Work from one side only as much as possible;
- Install 22 sediment traps to make certain the temporary land disturbance doesn't harm water quality or clog some other waterway;
- Remove only trees that impede the water flow, and plant grass and trees and shrubs as soon as possible;

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--And leave some of the old oxbows for good wildlife habitat.

The continued usefulness of all this activity, of course, depends largely on you. The landowners have done very well at installing soil and water conservation practices. Yet about 5,000 acres in the Silver Creek watershed are not yet adequately protected from soil erosion. Land treatment (watershed protection) and structural measures (flood prevention) are full partners. Without conservation treatment the lakes and the stream corridors won't be effective very long. The land treatment requirements in the project plan are just minimum goals. You and your neighbors need to get all the land tied down and keep it in good, erosion-proof condition. We are depending on you!

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I'm pleased to note that virtually all of the more than 120 land operators in the Silver Creek watershed are cooperating with the Minnehaha Conservation District. I think you'll keep the conservation work moving with the district's help. I pledge you the continued support and technical assistance of the SCS.

In this watershed project, we have all learned to cooperate with a number of different individuals, organizations, and agencies. I hope you can continue the cooperation in keeping this project in fine tune, and in working toward other community aims.

This part of South Dakota prairie is a good place to live and work. I know you will strive to keep it that way. I therefore dedicate the Silver Creek Watershed to its long-range purposes--watershed protection and flood prevention