

Mr. Donaldson
Pres. Budd
Hon. Bob Truitt
Ladies & Gentlemen

GRABBING FOR THE BRASS RING

It's good to be back in Wyoming, particularly for a Westerner like myself. Washington, D.C. is exciting, and I enjoy my work which helps you do the job out here in your conservation districts. But it's great to join you, especially in a place like this where there is room to breathe the clean air of one of the truly unspoiled areas in our country.

One of the greatest things about your State is its people. Wyomingites have the kind of rugged individualism that made this country great. You need not make a lot of noise; your actions speak for themselves. And when you do say something, it makes sense and carries a commitment to action.

Material for Norman A. Berg, Associate Administrator, Soil Conservation Service, Washington, D.C., at the Annual Meeting of the Wyoming Association of Conservation Districts, Buffalo, Wyoming, December 1-3, 1971.

The label "Conservation" has provided the opportunity to talk and write about a good many environmental problems, such as forests, soils, water and wildlife, for years--at least since the days of such conservationists as President Theodore Roosevelt, Governor Gifford Pinchot, and Chief H. H. Bennett.

Lately the range of the subject has broadened sharply. Currently the most prominent aspects are population and pollution, of water, air and soil, including thermal and noise. Newer concerns include radioactivity, chemicals, pesticides, herbicides, mercury, electric power, oil spills, livestock animal wastes, food contamination, recycling and even sediment.

Is the public's interest in this broad range of environmental topics a temporary thing? There are some indicators that this could happen, but don't bet on it. Presumably the environment will be around for awhile!

- 3 -

I come from a background and experience that builds on the premise that resource conservation and development is first and foremost for people. Priority must go to the needs of a decent livelihood and a healthful environment. We can do this without environmental harm--by getting the facts, planning for wise decisions and quality implementation of the plans.

We cannot advocate economic development at the expense of the environment, neither can we have one-goal planning. And there are rare times when harm may occur by giving priority to only "people" needs.

Experience tells us that a man has a fairly short time horizon, (not much beyond a pending winter) but his exceeds anything else on earth in this regard.

Continued success in striving for increases in comfort and security has placed man in a present day technological box--namely man--caused environmental problems.

- 4 -

He has, however, been in other boxes in the past (plague and famine, conquest and inquisition). History shows he has survived by ingenuity, adaptation, or compromise. Past boxes were primarily local, regional, or categorical; today they are global and almost all encompassing. However, the same courses of action are open. An optimistic hope is that man will act wisely, and in haste to initiate corrective, global programs in place of short-sighted actions.

The last session of your State Legislature and the changes in your Conservation District Law are examples. I am impressed with the important changes that have broadened your districts' scope and authority for the conservation of natural resources.

- 5 -

Changing the name of Soil and Water Conservation Districts to Conservation Districts, including all cities and towns in existing districts, altering the name of the State Conservation Committee to State Conservation Commission, simplifying procedures for adding to districts, and intra-district cooperation are all the right way to go for resource conservation in the 70's. You people are "with it." Congratulations, on a job well done!

Now that you've opened some new doors, got the hinges oiled, and the machinery working, I urge you to continue the broadened aspects of your activities. I say this, because I believe districts here and around the country are on the verge of being asked to repeat their performance of the 30's--not only in reducing soil erosion, but in their leadership and involvement in the whole field of environmental protection and enhancement. Your actions indicate you are ready to grab for the brass ring of opportunity ^{truly} as ^{one of} ~~the~~ ^{local} state and national leaders in this time of "environmental crisis."

- 6 -

Your district activities are ample proof of your ability to "swing" with the times and to provide the avenue through which a national-state-local team can bring its technical, financial, and other ^{help} assistance to local people.

I'm impressed that the City Manager of Casper has instructed subdivision developers to present a satisfactory plan for prevention of wind and water erosion from new housing developments before city utility hook ups are authorized. ^{what makes this} ~~This is even more~~ impressive when ^{is} ~~you consider~~ that the City Manager sends developers to the chairman of the local conservation district for ^{help} ~~assistance~~ in working out their plans.

Requests from Casper, Kemmerer, Gillette, Lovell, Worland, Riverton, and Evanston for soil surveys and interpretative information for urban planning are good signs that your districts ^{now} ~~are~~ making an impact in urban areas.

- 7 -

One of the best ways to continue and increase ~~urban~~ people's interest in conservation is through young people, and the best time to influence the thinking of tomorrow's leaders is while they are in school. You've recognized this and a number of your conservation districts are working with school districts in the development of outdoor classrooms. Your State Association and Conservation Commission are sponsors of, and contributors to, the annual Sheridan Junior College teacher training workshop on conservation. I understand that same kind of support ^{also} is given to the Junior College workshop at Powell each year. And the nearly 100 per cent monetary participation in the annual 4H Conservation Camp at Jackson Hole is certainly commendable.

I don't want to dwell on the value of this kind of effort with young people, but I do want to make this one point. We are going to need good capable young leaders in the future as we need them now, and we're going to need their support and help in solving the environmental problems facing our country.

- 8 -

So, I would encourage you to give young people every opportunity to become involved in district activities.

Quite naturally, broadened environmental programs result in increased activity. (Such is the case in Wyoming, where districts and the SCS provided assistance to ^{help nearly 5000} 4,979 individuals during last fiscal year. Inventories and evaluations were provided to an

additional 80 landusers, while 246 groups were assisted. One hundred ninety-two units of government were aided in various phases of resource conservation planning. And nine resource conservation plans were developed by communities using material prepared by SCS.)

> Your RC&D projects are going strong. The Wyoming portion of the Black Hills project in Crook, Weston, and Niobrara Counties is gearing up to get its project measures underway. The Western Wyoming project at Lincoln and Uinta Counties has 48 project measures in the mill, with five completed last year. Increased annual gross income from these measures is projected at over \$1 million.

7 The Great Plains Conservation Program operates in 12 eastern Wyoming counties. Last fiscal year, 41 contracts were signed on 268,134 acres. Presently, 303 contracts are in force, and a total of \$2,594,000 has been paid to Wyoming producers.

42 Forty-two applications for project assistance under the Watershed Program have been accepted by the State Conservation Commission. Eleven work plans have been approved and structural measures have been installed on seven projects. The State of Wyoming provides about \$10,000 per year to speed up work plan development. Each year the State's economy realizes about \$276,000 in benefits from completed projects. A continuing construction program of more than \$1 million per year has been generated.

These are significant accomplishments for Wyoming last year, and even more impressive when viewed in the light of a number of constraints on employment and spending. You recognized the need for reorganization and increased efficiency over the last few years.

- 10 -

We appreciate the fact that you support the need to consolidate some district and work unit operations even though it ^{temporarily} meant reduced technical help. Districts have generally rallied to the aid of SCS in belt-tightening situations. Wyoming districts are no exception, and we appreciate and value this cooperation.

At the same time, I am optimistic about the current situation regarding employment and grade structures. We see this as a temporary thing, and look forward to the removal of these restrictions.

Perhaps "Coop" ^{will tell} has told you that the SCS budget for Wyoming in Fiscal

Year 1972 is up more than a million dollars over last year's figure.

*San. Mo. Del.
Sen. D. Smith*
This increased allotment shows up most graphically in Conservation Operations--\$371,000, Watershed Operations--\$443,200, Great Plains--\$515,000, and RCSD--\$176,000.

These increases mean that the Service ^{will} should be able to finance more positions in Wyoming than last year. Some of these positions had been filled when a freeze halted government employment in late August.

- 11 -

Later on, hopefully, "Coop" ^{and will} ~~should~~ be able to fill additional

positions before he reaches his 1972 employment ceiling. So, from

the standpoint of funds and positions, we hope you too see the

future of SCS and districts as a little brighter.

One of our reasons for optimism came in President Nixon's
"Salute to Agriculture" earlier this year when he said:

"Another area where government should do more to provide
technical assistance to farmers is that of soil and water conservation.

Long before most Americans were thinking very much about the
environment, our farmers, our ranchers, our woodland owners were
working together with government to conserve our natural resources.

I believe we should now be providing more help for our dedicated
corps of soil conservationists whose number has dropped sharply in
the past four years."

- 12 -

"I am, therefore, increasing my new budget request for the Soil Conservation Service by \$12 million to provide more manpower for this valuable work. I am also proposing that Federal grants for small watershed projects be increased by \$28 million to a level of \$105 million, and that 75 new projects be authorized." You are aware that Congress acted to turn the President's recommended increases into law, along with some very significant increases of its own.

This is why "Coop" has a bigger operating budget for 1972 than he had last year. And this is why you, ^{you} too, should be encouraged about the prospects for soil and water conservation in the years ahead.

With this type of support, let me assure you that SCS recognizes its responsibility to organize and operate Service programs in a manner and amount needed to get the job done in resource conservation and development.

- 13 -

I hasten to say that the Service will continue to direct the bulk of its personnel and financial resources to field offices where the conservation program must be applied.

Now, with all this optimism and support for soil and water conservation at the Washington level and across the Nation, where do we go from here with our conservation effort in this era of rapid change? In considering this question, let's keep in mind that SCS and districts were born and cut their teeth in a period of accelerated change.

But rapid change makes it necessary to plan our future goals and activities as never before in history. Already we've witnessed a dangerous gap in our society between the ability to misuse, pollute, and deplete our resources and the ability to correct these evils. We must make sure in the years immediately ahead that we close this gap, or, at the very least, keep it from widening.

- 14 -

With this need in mind, SCS has ~~just~~ completed a framework plan to guide its activities in the decade of the Seventies--and beyond. It is a fairly complex document, but one I know will be of interest to you. I'd like to share a few of its highlights with you as we jointly look ahead toward 1980.

It begins by stating the mission of the Service--to assist in the conservation, development, and productive use of the Nation's soil, water, and related resources so that all Americans may enjoy

1) quality in natural resources, 2) quality in the environment, and 3) quality in the standard of living. We want and need resources that will sustain quality under continued use; an environment that will provide attractive, convenient, and satisfying places to live, work, and play; and a living standard based on improved communities and adequate income.

*For instance**there is*

In the field of water storage ~~we~~ need to determine the needs,

identify and preserve potential reservoir sites, include adequate storage plans in watershed planning, and use each damsite to its optimum potential.

SCS, over the years, has undergone a steady transition--
a pattern of change which gives the Service a broader concept of the soil and water conservation mission. We have developed techniques and expertise in collecting data and in evaluating, planning, designing and improving resource management systems. We believe that survey and monitoring tasks will be one major part of our future work.

We must identify, classify and delineate resources and their properties--and we must monitor the changes or trends almost certain to take place. Our survey work must be continuously current and useful. We must keep abreast of changes by periodically evaluating and recording the extent and condition of our resources.

Under its framework plan, SCS will focus on efforts to:

Protect and improve soil and water resources and improve environmental quality; and support rural development to increase jobs, improve facilities, stabilize the economy, and make rural America a better place to live.

In all this we will consider needs and functions of all life forms--human, plant, and animal.

Benefits we seek for people include adequate amounts of quality cropland and pastureland, rangeland and woodland, clean water, fish and wildlife habitat, pleasing urban and rural landscapes, and fresh air.

One significant goal in the plan has been with us from the beginning of the conservation movement--soil erosion and sediment reduced to an acceptable level. Perhaps we cannot yet ^{fully} define "acceptable." But the present situation--despite some impressive accomplishments--is certainly not acceptable. About four billion tons of soil are eroded and redeposited by moving water each year--a quarter of it deposited in estuaries and the sea.

- 17 -

More than 300 million acres of farm and ranchland are still eroding.

Erosion along 425,000 miles of rural roads and highways increases maintenance costs, creates safety hazards, and degrades our rural scenery. Excessive erosion occurs along 148,000 miles of streambanks. Wind erosion damages up to 2.7 million acres a year in the Great Plains and is serious in other parts of the country.

Fortunately, if the problems of our environment are accelerating, so too is the technology which will solve these problems. We are on the threshold of gaining new tools for getting many types of data: Earth orbiting spacecraft; high altitude flights in planes; infrared and other special types of high altitude photography--just to name a few.

^{of range}
The soil survey, of course, will continue to be a basic tool in conservation work. SCS is embarked on an all-out program to speed publication of reports, maps, and interpretations for many uses.

- 18 -

This is only a brief sampling of our framework plan--our agency's counterpart to the NACD district outlook, which national, state, and district elements are striving to carry out now. I believe that we will continue to work together in a spirit of mutual confidence, united by the common belief in our ability to solve these new environmental problems as we have solved equally difficult problems in the past. With such teamwork, we can do the best job possible of responding to your needs for technical help, and we will be able to continue to look to the districts as the prime movers in getting on with the ever more complex job of soil and water conservation.

- 19 -

This brings me back to the beginning of this talk where I said I believed the people of this country are on the verge of looking to soil conservation districts for more help and counsel in solving the environmental problems facing our country today. *John: des*

It seems to me the one thing districts need to concentrate on in this regard is making sure all people understand you do have this kind of expertise available---and it's available whether they live in the Worland area or in the City of Cheyenne.

This means you've got to do an information and public relations job if you want to grab for that brass ring of leadership. It matters little how much potential you have available. If you don't get people's attention, your story will not be told nor your help asked for to the degree that it should be.

All segments of the public must understand what we are doing if we are going to continue to do effective work.

John: des

- 20 -

This public also includes various interest groups, and we must make a determined effort to work with, and include more groups, in our movement, whether we agree with them on every issue or not--or whether they always agree with us.

No two people are going to agree on everything, but that doesn't prevent them from working together toward common goals. And we're always going to find someone or some group that doesn't think much of us no matter how clearly we state our case. We must expect some opposition; but we should not be surprised or diverted by it. Over the long haul I believe we're going to continue to find more people who agree with us on essential questions than those who disagree.

Experience and results and legal authorities do count.