

POLLUTION ABATEMENT:

Implementation Through Service Programs

The chance to meet with you in discussing pollution abatement through soil and water management--the oldest and the newest Service responsibility--is timely.

By now you have had good discussions about

--the sources of pollution in this Nation;

--the scope of our pollution problems;

--the relationship between pollutants and the soil and

water resources with which we deal every day; and

--the responsibilities, objectives, and policies of

several agencies.

Speech by Norman A. Berg, Associate Administrator, Soil Conservation Service, at the Workshop on Pollution Abatement Through Soil and Water Management, Portland, Oregon, August 11, 1971.

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You have noted that some of these matters are "old hat" to an SCS professional. You and your fellow conservationists have been dealing with pollution abatement and improvement of environmental quality--directly and indirectly--throughout the history of our organization. In another sense, though, pollution abatement needs a much greater focus in all our work--we need to get with it. That is why you are here.

A look at the new SCS guide to pollution abatement measures demonstrates the fact that most of our conservation practices, the way that we have been installing them, have helped alleviate one or more pollution problems. The guide, by the way, is an important reference to policies on how far we can go in what areas of pollution abatement. There are other cases in which conservation practices could be applied in a different place or a different manner in order to do a better job or to do a new job.

Some requests for our help have come before we were quite ready

with the answers. Some have come before we were quite

sure of certain purposes & for certain

our authorities. And ~~some~~ ^{many} have come when we didn't know where to

find time to work on them.

Yet, at this workshop, you have learned or been reminded

that we ~~do~~ ^{do} have some clearcut authorities in the pollution-abatement

arena. We could do a better job with some additional authorities,

and we are actively seeking them. But we can do much more than

we have with the authorities we have now. And we must.

You have learned that research is needed in the adaptation

of conservation practices or the design of new ones to lessen pollution

problems. But we can do a better job with the conservation practices

that are available to us now. And we must.

The Service for a number of years has taken on ever broader

(usually because we moved into a vacuum)

assignments, sometimes with a reduced staff, and for a district

conservationist to fit them all into a workday is a challenge.

Administ

See allotment letters plus grade level

The Congress saw fit to boost our appropriation this year so that

we could begin to get back to something more than a "skeleton crew"

We had been pruned down - honed up to basics
in 3,000 counties. We also hope to add more specialists to back *- what was*

up the field conservationists in work such as solid-waste

i.e. our prime resp. in 1st place

management and water quality control. But we can do more and

better conservation work and pollution abatement with the staff

we have now. And we must.

SCS is only one of many agencies involved in pollution abatement. But our responsibility for direct technical assistance on the land gives us an excellent opportunity to play a major role in USDA programs to help reduce agriculture-related pollution of soil, water, and air,

We intend to take a major role in this work. *USDA must*
of our resp - to rural America - our prime client will
be asked, you told - to do things that are
impractical to implement
see "confidential" proposal

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We will need to settle on priorities, for pollution abatement work. If some time spent on pollution abatement will bring more public benefit to the total community than say putting in a diversion on a farm, then it's pretty clear where you ought to spend your time. But how much time? In some cases the amount of a DC's time spent on agricultural waste control work is getting disproportionately large although he is doing a whale of a job in this new area. To do the best overall job, perhaps he needs to get himself out of the natural desire to want to follow a project clear through the installation stage. As the long range plan outlines, we may need to get others geared up to take over some stages of conservation jobs. In most cases we will need to set size or dollar limits on pollution abatement work beyond which we ought to recommend calling in private consultants, professional engineers, or others. These limits are being established in most states.

Some other changes in our work will come about as the result of actions outside the Service--such as the Environmental Policy Act that Hollis discussed this morning, the new REAP practices that call for SCS technical backstopping, and a growing compendium of State and local legislation on environmental improvement.

For example, the Virgin Islands has a new Environmental Protection Act under which development plans must be submitted to the local soil conservation district for approval. Maine has a statute that requires clearance of suburban development plans as a check on soil suitability for specific purposes. The Kansas State Highway Department has signed a cooperative agreement with the Service.

These and other sources put new demands or requirements on SCS and district activities.

There will be more coming that will require SCS technical help and we are going to need some funds. As a rule-of-thumb estimate, we probably will require about 10-15 percent for on-site technical help out of every dollar expended on pollution abatement. How much of that we will get will affect how well we can carry out the needed SCS technical help in suitability, design, and supervision of construction, and compliance checks without taking the time away from something else.

All this pollution-abatement and environmental action that is shaping up inside the Service and elsewhere means that we are in the business. As I said, we're only one of many agencies working in the pollution abatement field. Some of the others are just now learning that the Soil Conservation Service exists and has been making meaningful contributions for a long time.

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We have an opportunity here to develop strong relationships with these agencies that can stand us in good stead in activities that reach beyond any immediate projects or programs. We can help each other do a better job. So maintaining good rapport with other agencies in the field is important. Equally important will be our keeping high standards for the waste management work that we do. We can build a reputation in pollution-abatement and environmental improvement. Whether it is a good one or not depends on the kind of help we give.

Let me repeat what we said in Environmental Memorandum 4 that transmitted the Guide to SCS work in pollution abatement:

"Measures to control pollutants often require a high degree of technical skill to plan and apply. For those measures shown in the guide, SCS employees usually are technically competent. They should, however, appreciate the complex nature of this work and be sure they do not extend themselves beyond their actual knowledge.

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Some of these measures should be undertaken only after adequate consultation with representatives of appropriate local and State agencies. Knowledge of State law and working relationships will help to avoid controversy and meet environmental objectives."

So we need close cooperation. We need high standards. We need to continuously educate ourselves in techniques to do a better job. We need to use our experience in working with landowners and communities to help determine research needs and other sources of needed help in each area of pollution abatement. And we need to help conservation district governing boards "get with it."

We must adapt and apply our knowledge to the urgent need for pollution abatement as we have to all other challenges. It must be part and parcel of working toward our Service's three mission objectives, as stated in the long-range plan:

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--Quality in the natural resource base for sustained use;

--Quality in the environment to provide attractive,
convenient and satisfying places to live and work; and

--Quality in standards of living based on community
improvement and adequate income.

You have quite a challenge. The other speakers this
afternoon will give you some valuable guidelines in the specific
uses of conservation and waste-management practices. You will
need to blend those guidelines with the resource conditions in
your area and with the laws and ordinances in your State.

I'm confident that you can and will meet these challenges.

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