

PROGRAMS TO HELP PEOPLE MAKE THE CHOICES

The process of land resource use and management is a complex one with many different elements...technical components, broad policy outlines, general plans that have been adapted from earlier experiences. One element present in almost every land-use issue is people.

Successful land-use decisions hinge primarily on people: how well they study the situation, understand the choices, make their preferences known, and indicate their readiness to support the decision. Instead of trying to make choices for people, we would serve them better by designing programs that involve them more extensively throughout the decisionmaking process. In reaching for more broadly based participation, however, we should not dilute the contributions of local interests.

A trend toward more "people involvement" is already underway. An emerging insistence on "the right to plan" may be the next significant citizen movement in our country. This should make land use decisions more generally acceptable once they are made; but it may cause some difficulties in the decisionmaking process.

An urgent need is to help people understand the problems of resource limits and to make whatever adjustments are necessary to operate within these limits. Prime and unique farmlands are one of America's resources in limited supply. More of this acreage is urbanized every year. Concerted action is needed to insure that too much of this limited resource is not lost to less vital uses.

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Summary of speech by Norman A. Berg, Associate Administrator, USDA Soil Conservation Service, at the National Symposium on Land Use Planning, Soil Conservation Society of America, Omaha, Nebraska, March 22, 1977.

We have had programs to study and evaluate land use changes, and reported the findings. These efforts are still required; but we need at the same time to put together action programs that are technically workable and politically acceptable, by:

- (1) Informing, educating, and involving more people in land-use decisions.
- (2) Demonstrating that land-use programs can work.