

PUTTING FIRST THINGS FIRST:

A National Perspective on Land Use

M.K.P. Thank you Kyle - Pres. Robbins - Friends
Dir. Bureau
Sadisa Quillman
Hongood

M/1540

When the Spanish first ~~came posing around your~~ *came to this* part of the country almost five centuries ago, the land area that is now Mississippi was home to ~~some~~ 20,000 ~~plus~~ Indians. By 1820, your first census, ~~there were still~~ *recorded* only 75,000 people, all ~~of them~~ rural. Compare those totals with ~~the~~ *your* 1970 figure of 2.2 million residents, only about half ~~of them~~ rural. ~~In the~~ Nation ~~as a whole~~ *wide*, 74 percent of the people have migrated from the farm and other rural areas to ~~less than~~ 2 percent of the ~~land~~ *U.S.* area.

But the American people have ~~said~~ *Now* said "hold it." From ~~the mid-1960's~~ *1965* to ~~the mid-1970's~~ *1975*, we have lived through a decade when Americans:

--Decided dirty water, polluted air, junky landscapes and an otherwise poor quality environment could and should be changed;

~~Cast doubt on values that smacked of (artificiality)~~

--Began adopting a new set of values that have long been found in rural areas; and

--Began to seek the tranquility, the quietness and rustic appeal of trees, lakes, and hills--the neighborliness of country living.

For the first time in American history, more people are now moving away from cities than are moving to them. Job opportunities are increasing faster in rural areas.

Material for talk by Norman A. Berg, Associate Administrator, USDA Soil Conservation Service, at the annual meeting of the Mississippi Association of Soil and Water Conservation District Commissioners, Jackson, Mississippi, December 10, 1975.

Concern about ~~the typical patterns~~ of urban growth and ~~their~~ impacts on land and resource use permeates the local scene, the state legislatures, and the federal bureaucracy. It ~~impacts on~~ ^{influences} the programs of many organizations, including yours.

Land use concerns ^{not only} receive priority attention in the heavily populated states, but also in those states where you have to hunt for neighbors. Growth management and land use control headed the list of major concerns at the National Governor's Conference last June.

The desire for more quality in the lives of American citizens began as a quiet, subtle thrust in the 1960's. Gaining momentum, it challenged the private sector and the "establishment," and demanded to know whether corporate enterprise could exercise even the simplest characteristics of good citizenship. It became a thrust felt by every political fiber in the country.

~~This thrust--~~ This new national attitude--brought action from Congress, state legislatures, and the executive branches of government. Sweeping new measures were born, some of them now in need of re-examination. There are still many different viewpoints ^{how best to} on ~~managing~~ growth in the Nation, the states, or in any one community. No one speaks for all the viewpoints.

USDA's concern was expressed recently by ^{my} Assistant Secretary - Robert Long in testimony before the U.S. House Committee on Science and Technology. He said we may have the capacity to meet the Nation's ^{long term} needs for adequate supplies of good quality food, feed, fiber, and wood products--at prices consumers can afford to pay and with reasonable returns to the producers, the processors, and the marketers. We can make it, said Secretary Long:

- 7 1 - "IF adequate acreages of the best lands are available for crop production;
- 7 2 - "IF agriculture remains competitive with other demands for access to available water supplies;
- 3 - "IF genetic resources are available for yielding nutrients required by man and animals and for responding to disease, insect and other environmental stresses;
- 4 - "IF there are effective chemical pesticides available to supplement biological and cultural methods of pest control;
- 7 5 - "IF there are adequate supplies of plant nutrients at reasonable costs;
- 6 - "IF there is an effective farm-to-market transportation system;
- 7 - "IF there is an effective credit system; and
- 7 8 - "IF there are sufficient numbers of highly trained people skilled in management who find modern-day farming to be a rewarding and reasonably profitable life pursuit."

What about ^{that first IF - i.e. -} adequate acreages of the best lands available for crop use and food production?

An article ^{this fall} in the Washington Post ~~was~~ headlined, "Farmland Loss: No Critical Issue." ^{the writer's real estate report -} it ridiculed the "million-acre myth" of the annual rate ^{(since} (WWII) of conversion of agricultural land to other uses. But, as I said in a ^{return} letter to the editor, the loss of our best farmland is of critical concern, ~~(whatever the right acreage figures may be)~~

Among other things:

--The national figures mask important shifts in land use occurring at local and regional levels;

--There is no way of telling what quality of lands are involved, without better inventorying and monitoring of top-yielding lands;

--Strip development often results in premature conversion of far more acres than are actually built ^{or}; and

--Much of the remaining arable land in the Nation, while physically suited for agricultural production, is scattered or in small tracts that may be uneconomical to cultivate.

> It is increasingly clear that if present cropland is farmed more intensively, seeking higher and higher ~~(average)~~ yields, it will take more ~~(and more)~~ energy as well as place greater strains on soil and water resources. This will force farmers to make greater investments in *their* conservation systems.

Were the cropland base to expand by 100 million acres in the next 15 years, millions of those added acres should be Class I, II and III land. Even these lands, though, would require varying investments in *soil* conservation--^{*of water, management*} ~~some substantial~~--to make them usable for crops on a sustained basis. We've ~~got to~~ ^{*should*} strongly encourage making those investments-- or strongly discourage plowing up acres that can't be protected against erosion at reasonable cost. The alternative would be loss of hundreds of millions of tons of soil.

Something else: Millions of those "available acres" are in good use now as pasture or woodland. Converting them is not just a question of "can we hold the soil in place," but also do we want to do without the grass and trees ~~(and landscape variety?)~~
of their value!

~~(For all these reasons and more~~ It is of primary importance that we do the best job we can with the acres already being farmed.

Secretary of Agriculture Earl Butz last month ^{again} called on farmers and ranchers to make a "personal commitment" in conservation, because "soil erosion from wind and water is still a serious threat to stepped-up food production so essential to this country and the world." He warned that "if we don't find a way to get the job done on a voluntary basis, somebody is going to try to make soil conservation a mandatory thing--and that could turn into a bureaucratic nightmare.

"The goal for the Nation is to preserve and improve our capacity to produce food and fiber and to help clean up our lakes and streams. A commitment to conservation also is needed from land developers and builders, since construction projects also are subject to severe soil erosion if left unprotected."

Secretary Butz declared that "a conservation crusade would require no new agency to put it into effect, since leadership is already there" in conservation districts. Produce MORE - Protect MORE

Conservationists must also continue to advocate the preservation of prime agricultural land. USDA last July took leadership in a Seminar on Retention of Prime Lands. The ^{advance} papers and the discussions went a long way toward ^① identifying what prime lands are, ^② the steps that should be taken to assure careful decisions about their use, ^③ and the likely consequences of those actions.

Participants called for:

1.--Formulation of a national policy for meeting food and fiber needs to at least the year 2000. *CAREER people - 2005*

2.--Development of ^{public} policy on the "retention of prime and related land for agricultural use," especially at the fringe where rural and urban areas meet. *MY GRAND-children*

3.--Development by USDA of a land classification system, based on soil surveys, to assist ^{local people} in making land use decisions. (SCS has started an inventory, under SCS Land Inventory and Monitoring Memorandum #3, of the extent and location of prime and unique farmland. Coahoma, Lee and Panola counties in Mississippi are among the 100-plus counties participating in a test of that procedure. The inventory will provide benchmarks for monitoring shifts of prime farmland. Senate Bill 2081 now at the Congress is also directed to this end.) *> New East land*

- 4.--Intensified agricultural research aimed at improving productivity.
- 5.--Continuation of the present policy of making most land use decisions at the state and local levels.

We need to keep government close to the people. We need to return resources and responsibilities to state and local authorities. We need to allow the marketplace, competition, education, and voluntary cooperation to carry the main thrust. The alternative is rules, regulations, red tape, and reports that already threaten to swamp our free-enterprise system of self-determination.

*AS
Lyle B
said*

Agriculture is especially vulnerable to ill-considered and sometimes unnecessary regulatory actions. For example, debate is developing about the "interim final" regulations to implement Section 404(a) of Public Law 92-500. USDA is particularly concerned with:

--The extremely broad definition given in the regulations to "navigable waters" and related terms;

--The specific inclusion of "wetlands" within the term "navigable waters";

--The far-reaching implications as to federal land use control;

--The taking of private property rights without due process and just compensation; and

--The potential for adverse environmental and economic impacts on farm, ranch, forest, and other rural sectors of the Nation.

70 complaints

American farmers have a \$500 billion plant investment that is put in jeopardy by the ever-present threat of ill-advised governmental actions.

Rural America is concerned about any actions that may diminish the capacity of our nation to produce increasing quantities of the food, feed, fiber and wood products we need - *and all citizens should be!*

No "master planner" should ^{ever} sweep down out of the national or ^a state capital and mandate the use of ^{private} land for one of the basic missions of this country--to produce food and fiber. No national land use bill, if enacted,

^{is} going to drastically change the current way of making land use decisions in this Nation *without great harm to valued institutions*

The land use opportunities, the land use histories and practices, and the attitudes of people and governments vary from state to state. It is an error to try for any reason to push all these people and their states into some kind of common mold.

The forces that influence land use attitudes and decisions are ^{too} complex ~~and huge~~. They include the whole history of U.S. settlement, prevailing social values, pressures of population, pressures for resource development (as for food and energy), and changing modes of transportation and ^{even} new life styles. Many of America's cities were horse, boat, or train cities, now overlain or ringed about with automobile cities. We have ^{now} created ^{some} airport cities, ~~urban complexes centered on this relatively new form of transportation.~~ Space cities may be the next to come!

Some concerns about growth impact on land use are based on quality of living...or stretching community services too far. Others are based on potential loss of some natural resource. Some people are mostly worried about safeguards, others about protection of private property rights. There are some distinct urban and rural viewpoints. These are all very real.

Obviously, we need more fine cities. We need recreation areas of many kinds. We need small towns--and transportation systems to connect them. We need an adequate base of good agricultural and forestry land.

We need energy resources, including some of Mississippi's lignite deposits--

^{But} ~~and~~ we need to harvest them without wrecking the landscape. Need \$ to help

Mine leg of Sediment leg.

To achieve all these expanding aims or demands or needs for land when our total land base is fixed ~~in size~~ requires a close look at our ^{land use} decision-making processes...①reshaping here...②reassuring there...③and reforming over there.

Land use planners should take a cue from conservation districts. You have had a long-time concern about the land's environmental condition, carrying capacity, and systematic use and protection. These factors need to be applied in decision-making on all kinds of land. Agriculture must ^{also} have the major voice in what happens to agricultural land.

➤ What about the future role of ^{each} all levels of government in land use?

There is certainly no general agreement yet on what the federal role is or on what it should be. At a General Accounting Office symposium last month on land use, people from the Department of Housing and Urban Development showed a chart listing ~~all of the~~ separate plans affecting land use that ^{now} must be prepared by various government levels. (The chart was reprinted in the "Land Use Planning Reports" newsletter for November 24.) It's quite something.

The 35 separate programs, ^{listed} add up to more than half a billion dollars per year. They involve agencies in seven Departments and three independent agencies. They include efforts in the health and social arena; economics, law, and fire prevention; transportation; recreation; waste treatment; coastal zone management; and others. USDA wasn't even on the list.

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There is ^{one} ~~no~~ question that a program say in highway planning is going to result in better highways...that one in water quality planning is going to boost water quality. But because all these functional programs are mostly isolated from one another, there is a real question whether we are getting improved water quality from improved highway planning.

FEDERAL PLANNING ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS
OPERATING IN FISCAL 1975

Program	Administering Agency	Obligated Fiscal '74	Est. Fiscal '75 (in millions of \$)	LEVELS OF GOV'T ELIGIBLE				ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES				
				State	Area-Wide	Local & County	Other	Mgmt.	Health & Social	Econ. Devel.	Physical Devel.	Other
COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS												
701 Comp. Planning Assist.	OTD/USD	174.8	3100.0	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Appalachian Local Devel. Dist. Assist.	ARC	3.5	6.0	X			X	X	X	X	X	X
PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING												
Highway Planning & Research	PHWA/DOT	82.1	91.8	X	X						X	
Airport Planning Grant	FAA/DOT	8.4	9.5	X	X	X					X	
Urban Mass Transit Techn. Studies	UMTA/DOT	37.6	36.7	X	X						X	
Appalachian Highway Planning & Research	ARC	1.1	1.0	X							X	
Coastal Zone Management	NOAA/DOT	7.2	9.0	X							X	
State Outdoor Recreation Planning	BOR/DOT	2.1	2.0	X							X	
201 Waste Treatment Facilities	EPA	30.0	40.0	X	X	X	X				X	
207 Solid Waste Management	EPA	3.0	1.0	X	X						X	
209 Airside Waste Treatment	EPA	13.5	120.0	X	X						X	

Program	Administering Agency	Obligated Fiscal '74 (in million of \$)	Est. Fiscal '75	LEVELS OF GOV'T ELIGIBLE				ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES				
				State	Area-Wide	Local & County	Other	Mgmt.	Health & Social	Econ. Devel.	Physical Devel.	Other
Air Pollution Control Agency Support	EPA	5.2	5.2	X	X	X		X			X	
Water Quality Control Agency Support	EPA	16.0	12.8	X			X	X			X	
State Water and Related Land Resources	WRC	3.1	5.0	X							X	
Community Devel. Block Grant	CPD/HUD	0	*	1/	1/	X	1/				X	
Urban Studies Program	CE/ARMY	7.0	10.0				2/				X	
HEALTH AND SOCIAL PLANNING												
CETA Appalachian Demonstration Health Planning	MA/DOL	20.7 ^{3/}	*	X	X	X	X			X		
Special Program for Aging Health Resources Planning	ARC	2.9	2.9	X						X		
Comprehensive Alcoholism Svs. Drug Abuse Prevention	OHO/HEW	12.0	15.0	X						X		
Planning	PHS/HEW	33.7	*	X	X					X		
Drug Abuse Prevention	HEW	1.7	1.3				X					
Planning for Developmentally Disabled Youth Devel. & Delinquency Prevention	HEW	.6	1.2	X						X		
Drug Abuse Community Program	HEW	3.1	3.9	X						X		
Post-Secondary Education Statewide & Comp. Planning	HEW	2.1	3.2	X						X		
	HEW	1.7	.2				X			X		
	HEW	3.0	2.2 ^{4/}	X						X		
ECONOMIC AND OTHER FUNCTIONAL PLANNING												
Title III Economic Devel. District	EDA/DOC	7.7	9.0	X	X	X	X				X	
Title V Regional Action Planning Comm.	DOC	3.3	3.2				X				X	
Title IX Economic Adjustment	EDA/DOC	0	*	X	X	X	X			X	X	
Indian Tribal & Govt. Oper. State Disaster Plans	BIA/DOI	1.2	1.2				X	X			X	
Law Enforcement Planning	FDAA/HUD	.4	5/	X				X			X	
Master Plan for Fire Prevention Control	LEAA/DOI	50.0	55.0	X	X	X	X				X	
Historic Preservation Planning	DOC	0	6.0	X		X					X	
TOTAL	NPS/DOI	2.3	5.3	X							X	
		\$438.9	\$557.5									
Total number of programs 35 ^{6/}												

* Planning is an eligible activity under various block grant programs, however, the amount expended for planning is at the discretion of the applicant.

1/ States, areawide, counties, and localities are eligible only for discretionary funds.

2/ The Army Corps of Engineers provides only technical assistance.

3/ CETA replaced the cooperative area manpower planning program in fiscal '75.

4/ Budgeted 3 million but department asking for reduction in funding to phase out program. Budget will be 2.2 million.

5/ Up to a maximum of 14.0 million.

6/ A total of 35 programs is the result of a consolidation of HEW's Comprehensive Health Planning, Regional Medical Programs and Health Resources Planning; and the elimination of Appalachian Child Development Planning and State Equalization Plans due to non funding in fiscal 1975.

One added role for the Federal Government, then, should be to get ^{try to} its own act in order. It should respond to state and local needs, but not dictate decisions. ~~Any~~ Federal land use program ^s should not harrass individuals, local governments, or the States. ~~Instead,~~ [↓] It should review and settle conflicts in Federal investment decisions, programs, and actions.

We also need to improve the data services upon which local land use decisions are based. Help in developing a model state "package" of land use laws may be a high priority. Federal grants might also help States develop modern enabling legislation.

The U.S. Congress has been debating national land-use bills that could begin "getting our house in order" and aiding states. The outlook for early action on any of the bills, though, is remote. Acceptable national legislation is not going to be easy to develop. Why? Land use affects everyone's life, so we have ^{as many} ~~212 million~~ opinions on what is needed, ^{as people.}

Many of the past proposals ~~have~~ emphasized a regulatory approach, but this ^{is} ~~may~~ not be a wise course of action. ^{How Long to know} It is next to impossible to regulate Americans into doing anything they don't want to do. Laws can be ignored, regulations conveniently overlooked or forgotten. Yet if voluntary improvements in land management decisionmaking are not forthcoming, there will be ^{loudly} demands for more regulation and control. (Some coordination of local and regional activities is needed in any case.)

~~Some of~~ The trouble with national and ^{some} state land-use bills has been that many farmers and foresters are honestly worried that land use legislation will seriously restrict their rights and freedom, and stifle their individual opportunities and initiative.

Some of the trouble lies in the pocketbook. Land is property, and property can become dollars. This draws a few greedy types who would pad their bank accounts no matter what it may mean to society. To a great many more people, however, property represents a lifetime of work and investment. It means a future for their children. It is the place that gives meaning to life itself. It is home. *It is their social sec,*

These two kinds of people need to be treated differently. But it is difficult to fashion a law sensitive enough to deal with each properly. Drawn too loosely, it restricts honest folk while others continue to rip off the land. Drawn too tightly, it treats everyone alike by smothering them in restrictive regulations and red tape.

~~Now,~~ ^{MISS.} What does all this mean to conservation district commissioners? Land use is an important issue, and part of your job. Where land use issues are of concern to local decisionmakers, you have an important role. To be effective, you will have to understand the process you're dealing with--not only in general terms as I've been discussing, but also in specific local situations.

You already influence land-use decision-making when you adjust RC&D boundaries to fit regional planning and development districts. You influence landuse decisionmaking when you encourage woodland management... court wood-using industries...hold tree planting weeks. You influence land use decisionmaking when you help install new lakes and other improvements in one of the nation's most active and successful watershed programs. You influence land use decisionmaking when you promote pasture development... aid wildlife groups...get involved in river basin studies...aid farmers in the flood-prone but highly prized Delta. You influence land use decision-making when you give soil interpretations for agriculture, forestry, homes, or industrial parks.

In all these ways, you are in the land use game to stay. But it is getting more (~~complex and~~) challenging each year. ^{We need} ~~you have~~ to keep up to date. ^{We} ~~you~~ may have to innovate...develop some new ways to interpret the soil, water, vegetative, and other information that you have, or help identify or gather new kinds of valuable facts. You must ~~be an~~ advocate ~~for~~ the ethic of good land use where you feel it is lacking. You will probably get ~~close~~ ^{in some} to controversy, because land use issues often boil down to a conflict between private and public interests that can get ~~pretty~~ ^{NASTY,} intense.

You need to stay as objective and flexible as possible, remembering that you are primarily soil and water management experts ~~and not necessarily~~ ^{we are} ~~and not necessarily~~ fluent in every economic and social facet. Land use decisions affect the interests of many people. What may benefit some--or even most--may be to the detriment of others.

The making of such decisions is, in the end, largely a political rather than a technical natural resource process. Yet natural resources deserve to be considered more than they are in most cases.

You need to remember that we can't wait until all of the right state and local institutions and laws and programs are in place before we try to guide growth. Most states, Mississippi included, must cope with land use trends now, using current knowledge and abilities. There ~~really~~^{now} will be ~~an~~ ^{no} "end point" where all the proper mechanisms will be in place and all the land-use issues solved. Land use planning and control are a constantly developing mixture of social, environmental, and political science in ~~the~~ ^{the} changing real world. The frustrating conflicts that come along provide the motivation and learning needed to keep on improving the mixture.

~~(With our subject of land use darting every which way and changing right under our noses.)~~ It would be a good idea if definitive books on ~~the~~ ^{the} **LAND USE** subject were published loose-leaf.

SCS people and conservation district commissioners have been in the "loose-leaf" mode a long time, innovating and adapting an interdisciplinary approach to resource conservation programs. We've ~~been content to win~~ some battles and ~~lost~~^{even} some. Land use is the same kind of issue. If you can make your views known...if you can build an increased public concern for good land use...if you can keep the public aware of current situations, problems, and opportunities in land use...and if you can develop ^{communication} a pipeline so that soil and water facts ^{your experience w/} ~~are~~^{is} available for consideration in the decision-making process, then I am convinced you will win a lot more battles than you will lose.

2/2
You may not create the "perfect" land-use pattern for the future, ~~but~~
If such a thing exists at all it is beyond our grasp today.

Land use and resource conservation in Mississippi are Mississippi's
problem. You can't wait for ^{*capitol*}Washington or Jackson to act--and obviously you
haven't been waiting.

*see
600 10/2/74*
Around the country, the scope of activities of conservation districts,
their associations, and state conservation agencies is continuing to expand.
I understand that the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency
has said that conservation districts are a logical unit of government to
assume leadership in controlling nonpoint source pollution. Some districts
are beginning to get funds from EPA under provisions of Public Law 92-500.
In Mississippi, the Delta Council has passed a resolution asking the legislature
to re-emphasize to districts the need to aid in meeting PL 92-500 water quality
goals.

I do want to congratulate you on your prompt participation in
opportunities under the Emergency Jobs and Unemployment Assistance Act of
1974 and the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act of 1973. You've
had an active role in emergency work following several natural disasters.
You're giving attention to your state's 85 miles of Gulf Coast shoreline and
adjoining areas in Mississippi's "Coastal Zone," ~~and~~ that effort is helping
test some of the new land use processes.

Yes, every day there is more to do ~~and more~~ to keep in mind as we *continue*
do ~~all~~ ^{ing} the traditional jobs. The challenges are there for all of us. Our
future in the Soil Conservation Service is closely bound up with yours.
We wouldn't have it any other way!

Together, ^{more, will be} we are ~~are~~ concerned that America may...some day, some way...
overshoot the carrying capacity of its life support system. We can't ^{ever} see
the future clearly, but we can constantly evaluate trends in our community,
state, and nation. We can try to reverse or change those trends that we ^{agree}
~~think~~ are harmful. In a world full of people walking around with simple
answers to complex questions, we can be a voice for dealing with real issues
in workable pieces in workable ways. - *The quest for the answer*

may be more satisfying than the answer itself.
It's an exciting time to be in soil and water conservation - so you
believe in you 32nd yr. as an Asst. Dir. of Soil & Water
Cons. Dist. Curran.

Best wishes Dec. 1926!