

# PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Here we are again.

I am continually impressed by the leadership of conservation districts in Maryland and the close-knit relationship with many agencies in our state.

Much of my own effort in the Soil Conservation Service for the past 15 years has been directed at increasing conservation districts' ability to deal with all land and water problems, including sediment control and land-use policy; and everywhere I go:

--Part of my message is the Maryland experience;

--Part of the questions I hear are "what's new with those innovative characters in Maryland?"; and

--Part of the new programs I see developing are being molded from your suggestions and your experience to fit the specific needs and the social and political framework of other states.

Many of you in this unprounounceable room this morning are from a dozen or more other states that send people every year to steal a few ideas and to leave behind some equally useful ideas that add to Maryland's conservation program. Welcome to all of you.

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Material for talk by Norman A. Berg, Associate Administrator, USDA Soil Conservation Service, at the ninth annual Maryland Conservation Tour and Seminar, Columbia, Maryland, September 23, 1975.

Back in 1967, when Maryland's urban conservation tour was just getting started, sediment control and other problems of developing metropolitan areas reached wide attention in a National Conference on Soil, Water, and Suburbia that I had the privilege of co-chairing in Washington, D.C.

By the time I spoke at your fourth tour in 1970, there had been a National Conference on Sediment Control; a comprehensive guidebook on principles and practices that county governments helped prepare; and action in several states to begin developing sediment control programs.

I believe that what I said to you in Baltimore County five years ago still rings true:

"You have learned that cooperation and guidelines can work up to a certain point, and then conflicts over land-use policy or liability for sediment control work make statutes and regulations mandatory to be sure the interests of the community are served.

"Above all, I think you have learned that a conservation program is not farmland erosion control or urban sediment control or wildlife management or floodplain zoning or anything else all by itself. Providing for more people and retaining a high-quality environment take the broadest possible outlook and effort."

By 1973, when I had the privilege of addressing your sediment control institute attached to the "Maryland tour," the National Association of Conservation Districts was deeply involved in similar institutes in nearly every state in the union--including four gatherings in Hawaii--under a grant and some close interest from

the Environmental Protection Agency. The Council of State Governments had come up with a Model State Act for soil erosion and sediment control which was discussed and adapted at the institutes and in later sessions. And Maryland had embarked on a land-use study.

When the sediment control institutes began, five states had already acted on legislation--including Maryland. By the end of the 40-plus sessions, earlier this year, EPA reported that 12 states had taken legislative or executive action on sediment control. New legislation had been prepared in 15 other states. Efforts to enact previously drafted bills in several states had been speeded.

The institutes focused attention...created a dialogue...presented comprehensive information, much of it pioneered in or built on the Maryland experience...created a new environmental information resource for later educational use...brought a cooperative commitment to action...and brought acceptance of the need for regulatory and mandatory action in the field, through a preventive approach dealing with all land-disturbing activities and using conservation plans approved by conservation districts.

As I indicated at your 1973 institute, a workable sediment and storm water control program is one in which responsibility is transferred all along the line from the people who plan a land use change to those who review it, the builder, the bulldozer operator, the sediment control inspector, the landscape architect, the nurseryman, the homeowner.

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Decisions from the Appalachian highlands to the ocean beaches and from Mason and Dixon's line to the Potomac and the Lower Bay affect the future in each of your counties.

Urban construction is not the only significant source of sediment. With the increasing strong emphasis on farm production, I raised the question at your 1973 meeting whether sediment production might increase too. That turned out to be the case on 4 million acres that were brought into food-and-fiber production in 1973-74. The added soil loss was estimated at 60 million tons throughout the country.

When soil and water conservation got its formal start in the 1930's, soil erosion was unacceptable because it deteriorated the land. Gradually people recognized that in addition it was unacceptable because the eroded material became sediment that clogged or covered things downstream. Sediment gained attention as an essentially urban nightmare because of greatly accelerated erosion rates. Gradually people began to realize that many other land uses contributed just as formidably if not as dramatically. And soil erosion is unacceptable today because sediment is recognized as our number one water pollutant in terms of volume.

So, you see, you need to have one conservation program that covers all the bases. Indications are that you are beginning to put it together.

Sediment as a pollutant is gaining real attention by the Environmental Protection Agency, through several provisions of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act. EPA's report on the institutes made these recommendations:

1. Continue to place emphasis on the preventive approach in dealing with sediment and related non-point source pollutants.
2. Continue to utilize the Model State Act as an educational tool in discussion of the principles of regulatory programs for sediment control.
3. Cooperate with concerned organizations in preparing, evaluating, and delivering legislative and program materials that meet the objectives of PL 92-500 related to sediment control.
4. Exert every effort to encourage close cooperation among state water pollution control officials, state soil and water conservation agency leaders, conservation district officials, and the heads of other concerned state agencies in developing non-point source control programs in connection with sections 305(b), 208, 304, and other provisions of PL 92-500.
5. Cooperate with concerned organizations in preparing and using training materials and programs to aid in developing and implementing state and local erosion and sediment control programs.
6. Cooperate in research, education, and demonstration programs related to erosion and sediment control and related non-point source pollution abatement.

Conservation districts and their friends in state and county government have a strong role in helping design regulatory programs to protect water quality that fit the local situation; provide for local control; dovetail with technical and financial help; and leave room for voluntary efforts.

In Maryland and the other states represented here today, you are already getting involved in area-wide planning efforts under section 208 of the water-pollution control act. The Maryland Environmental Service of DNR is this state's designated agency to administer the 208 program for waste treatment. Conservation districts in the Washington metropolitan area have formed an association to work with the council of governments in the 208 process. A regional planning commission is active in the five-county area ringing Baltimore City.

The opportunity is here to show what conservation districts can do, and to see that plans reflect the point of view of agriculture and local people. The opportunity is here to help pollution-abatement programs blend with instead of take over from land-use decision-making.

Section 404 of PL 92-500 gives cause for concern about thrusting the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers into a heavy role in deciding land use and treatment on private land. This is the section you've heard about as "dredge and fill". The Corps has come up with an "interim final" version of a cumbersome permit system. It would give every Army district engineer the prerogative of determining that a landowner, watershed project sponsor, or state agency needs to go through a long "Mother-May-I" process before moving or placing material in or near practically any body of water or wetland.

Regional hearings on the regulations are being held this month, and SCS is working closely with the Corps and EPA to suggest changes. We hope the changes will be substantial.

But it all seems to come down to land-use issues. Conservation districts have a tremendous responsibility to help communities, counties, and states get land-use decisions made, policies set, issues resolved.

You've heard some of the dialogue about a national land-use policy act. You've been through a couple seminars on land use, and under the leadership of the University of Maryland's Frank Bentz and many others worked hard in a study on preserving agricultural land in Maryland. SCS was happy to lend the efforts of "Munk" Munkittrick and others to provide data and ideas. The final report is a useful one for many states and I hope you are making full use of it here at home.

One recent involvement of mine has been in a USDA Seminar on Retention of Prime Lands. We involved experts from federal, state, and local agencies; universities; industry; private research institutions; agricultural organizations; citizen's groups; and land-use planning and land-use law outfits. The upshot?--that even though America's land supply in total seems adequate to meet domestic and international needs for this century, USDA and others need to be concerned about where the prime farmlands are, and what is happening to them. In fact, the group told USDA that it and its friends in conservation districts ought to be strong advocates for retaining prime lands in agriculture.

The group's more than 30 recommendations included:

--Better data-gathering, including soil survey facts.



- Public education programs.
- Studies of government policies that help or hurt farm and ranch land use.
- Aid with setting national policy on growth.
- Monetary incentives or sanctions for keeping prime land.
- Coordinating better with land use decision makers in and out of government.

I am glad to see that in Maryland you are becoming more closely involved in the big picture of land use. You need to ask yourselves whether it is best for Maryland's future that it become one huge bedroom community for the Northeastern Megalopolis. You need to assess all the natural resources that make up Maryland's landscape and help design programs for saving, improving, developing, and using them in a creative way for the long-term benefit of people.

An article in the Sunday Post last month reported on a 10-week study by scientists and engineers suggesting that we create 100-billion-dollar cities in space that would house 10,000 people each and beam solar energy to earth. The mile-wide space colonies would be about as far away from the earth as the moon, and food for all the residents would grow on just 111 acres where crops would have continuous sunlight. Residents would have a half-mile-long landscaped vista and pure water would be recycled from sewage. Constant filtering would keep the air cleaner than that in any earthly city.

"Space City", so the scientists say, could be in business by the early 1990's.

The space shuttle isn't operating yet. And some people may prefer Chesapeake Bay or the rolling hills of Howard County to some Buck Rogers existence in the sky. So I think for quite some time it will be important for you to act to keep your state a satisfying place to live. We have the ability to accomplish it--but we don't have all the time in the world. Too many decisions are for practical purposes irrevocable. It's hard to jack up a condominium to grow another acre of corn.

What plan do you have for controlling the rate and direction of change in the area that concerns you? How do changes occur and in what direction? Or is there only an "unguided missile" approach--does growth just happen?

Are you concerned about all the consequences of land-use practices and decisions in Maryland and elsewhere? We may disagree with EPA on the need for pervasive regulations, but we are in harmony on the aim of quality water supplies and water systems. You've been reading about Congressman Gilbert Gude's month-long trip down the Potomac River to highlight the impacts of mining, recreation, farming, and urban wastes on our great river and on the people who make a living from it. He's calling for more federal, state, and local coordination to balance the varied activities along the river. You ought to be concerned about the best way to balance private rights and the public interest.

Are you concerned about all the consequences of too much urban development? You're well versed in sediment and stormwater and waste

management problems--or will be after today's session. There are other consequences to be considered. A 1972 book by Paul and Anne Ehrlich documented some effects of highly industrial populations on local climates. The climate of cities differs appreciably from that of the surrounding countryside in several respects, they said, due in part to the dissipation of heat from the human activity concentrated there. The mean annual temperature in cities in the U.S. is 0.9 to 1.40 degrees Fahrenheit higher than that in rural surroundings. Cloudiness and precipitation are 5 to 10 percent greater, and fog is 30 to 100 percent more prevalent. In the Los Angeles basin, the rate of energy dissipation by man is equal to  $5\frac{1}{2}$  percent of the solar energy absorbed by the area. When such alterations in normal energy flow are considered together with the influences of heat, gaseous and particulate matter released into the atmosphere, one can easily hypothesize all kinds of local effects on microclimate...not to mention the health and sociological effects of over-urbanization on the daily lives of people.

What we have basically in urban growth in this country is a mess. But that's more than a catchword. Let me define a mess in the way that Russell Ackoff of the President's Transportation Planning Study did--a mess is a system of interacting problems. And planning should be concerned with messes, not with problems. "The question of priorities," he says, "is misleading. All messes should be dealt with simultaneously and interactively."

So how do we deal with the messes and create the kind of future we want? How can we decide on a parcel-by-parcel basis whether to preserve current land uses or let the market or governmental action convert the land to other uses with their attendant problems? Can we call upon some expert with a list? Could we organize such a list that can display types of land and types of demands for land?

I personally don't feel we ever will have a rational, calm, objective planning effort. Emotions, conflicts, and tug-of-war demands are the substance of planning as a process of reconciling human preferences. We must increasingly generate institutions and policies that acknowledge relationships among governmental actions.

Blanket regulations based on hazy concepts applied in ignorance with no recourse to or regard for rational scientific thinking and facts could ruin us all. There's middle ground somewhere.

The objective of planning should be to design a desirable future and to invent ways of bringing it about. Or as Russell Ackoff put it, "we waste too much time trying to forecast the future. The future depends more on what we do between now and then than it does on what has happened up to now. The thing to do with the future is not to forecast it, but to create it."

The time is now to shape a conservation program that can help your communities decide what kind of future they want, and then help them shift land uses and manage land in a way that protects the environment.

To paraphrase James Rouse's 1967 comment, a Nation that does not love and respect its land does not respect itself.

I hope that in your discussions today and tomorrow you will look forward, you will help others respect land and people, and you will try to see individual aspects of your sediment control and other programs in the broadest possible setting.

I have no doubt that you will continue to keep Maryland Number One in creative conservation.

Thank you.

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