

James 8 Pres
8 Secy

Every 5 Chief - 5

172.1

QUEST FOR QUALITY: New Directions

Pres. John Hunt - Ladies & Gentlemen - 32nd Annual Mtg.

Proud to
be a part in
his
staff!

This may well be your most important session since the one where
you first formed your state association... and the most important since
the meetings that led to your recent good improvements in district
activities and staffing.

Florida in 1977 is part of a nation of extremes:
--A bitterly cold winter tested our energy systems and your citrus
trees...and, I am sure, led more of your northern neighbors to consider
moving to Florida. The pressure on your land and water will not slacken!

--A very dry year in much of the U.S. has tested our water
systems and our agricultural capability...two million acres have burned,
eight million acres have blown away, hundreds of counties including 35
of yours have needed emergency drought assistance.

--Another Johnstown flood has demonstrated once more the continuing
need for water resource action in upstream areas...and the need for some
new directions in managing flood plains.

--Regional shortages in hay and other crops are covered by an apparent
bountiful nationwide farm and ranch harvest...achieved in spite of bad
weather and in spite of the continuing shift of prime and unique
farmlands out of agriculture.

Material for speech by Norman A. Berg, Associate Administrator, USDA
Soil Conservation Service, at the annual meeting of the Florida
Association of Soil and Water Conservation District Supervisors,
Atlantic Beach, Florida, August 18, 1977.

--Demands have increased for research and for technical ^{or} financial assistance...at the same time as ^{citizens'} requests for lower taxes and a ~~smaller~~ ^{lean} government.

--Demands have escalated for coal and water and other needs...at the same time as heavy pressure for environmental preservation.

Americans have a ~~lot of~~ ^{many} natural resource needs and desires to balance at once. It is time to pull the extremes and the extremists toward each other and find a workable balance. I am convinced we can do that and do it in time, because of the experience and the promise of conservation districts. But the effort will be one of the ~~greatest~~ challenges America faces. As your meeting theme suggests, we do need to take some new directions. We need to rekindle our enthusiasm and re-earn our reputation.

The time is now!

The time is now to be sure we are (up to date) on as many (issues) as possible. - many items on the agenda ^{not it} ^{own} ^{making}

Opportunities come in many different shapes and sizes...as new data or technology...as new legislative packages...as new agency or organizational responses to public needs. I think your new committee structure and your leaders will help you keep an eye on many of them.

^{Water Quality} Districts, for example, took hold of the "Section 208" water-quality challenge...studied the intent...looked for workable procedures...and helped us deal with the Environmental Protection Agency and others. You have strengthened our position, and helped reach our conservation goals more quickly with more support.

- 3 -

The U.S. Senate last week demonstrated its support by unanimous passage of a bill ^{to amend 92-500, I will provide a method} to cost-share the implementation of 208 plans.

2. Surface mining is a current topic in the energy and environmental arena, and the new Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977 has been awaited a long time. Its ~~emphasis is coal~~, ^{emphasis} ~~not much of a~~ ^{will} ~~product in your state~~. But the law's intent and the law's approach ^{land use disturbance} fit many other commodities as well. ^{So you still} have a mined-land challenge in Florida. You do have the most acres of abandoned mined land from other than coal production--230,700 acres, mostly phosphate. The biggest coal state, Pennsylvania, has only a few thousand more acres abandoned.

The act sets up a special cost-sharing fund for reclaiming abandoned ^{coalmined} lands, and is supported by per-ton fees on surface and deep-mined coal. It also supports further research on reclamation techniques and environmental effects, ~~which is~~ badly and quickly needed. There is a lot we already know how to do...and we should accelerate our assistance.

3. Water quality is a critical issue in your state and all the others, for agriculture and for urban uses. Rural water quality may well be our biggest future assignment...through mined-land reclamation; erosion control; 208 work; and a new focus on wetland evaluation, management, and use. We have entered phase 3 of the Corps of Engineers' Section 404 permit system for dredging and filling. ~~SCS and~~ ^{we will help} The Fish and Wildlife Service have been working on a new wetland classification system and have altered our policies on technical assistance so as to preserve more wetlands. Our new guidelines on channel modification were published last week in the Federal Register along with our strengthened guide for environmental assessment ^{of project work.}

All of these pieces mesh into a greater new emphasis on land management for water protection.

4_n One other way to protect wetlands is to do a better job of protecting America's prime and unique farmlands. Out of 23 million acres converted *in the* from cropland to urban and water uses from 1967 to 1975, eight million were prime farmland. Some *prime or unique* other acres were your *citrus* groves. These losses cannot continue. Food and fiber needs would eventually dictate that landowners plow up wetlands or other acres where crop yields and quality would be lower, where environmental hazards and production costs would be greater, where wildlife production and enjoyment or groundwater recharge might have been a much better use of the property. SCS is helping many *cons. dist.* ~~counties~~ identify their important farmlands so that local planning agencies and landowners can make better decisions about *how* land-use shifts *affect our future.*

As a California Rural Affairs Council report said, there are many reasons why protection of farmland is an important goal of public policy:

- 4) It provides and protects open space.
- 2). It protects air and water quality, and watersheds.
- 3). It protects against floods and against incompatible uses on adjacent lands, such as airports next to housing.
- 1). It bolsters the competitive position of agriculture as a producer of food and fiber; as a major source of employment and economic opportunity; and as an alternative life style for those who choose it.
- 5). It protects the rural character of smaller communities where that is desired by local populations.
- 6). It protects small cities and towns against residential development which, in the absence of accompanying business and industrial development,

does not pay the cost of the additional community services required.

. It protects large cities against indiscriminate movement of businesses and industries outward into less densely populated areas.

. It prevents isolation of blocks of land that are neither farmed nor developed.

. It provides opportunity for disposal of treated wastes and effluents from waste treatment.

. Finally, it provides the widest feasible range of options for future uses of land; in other words, preserves flexibility in managing land and water resources.

→ As all of these individual issues ^{a otherwise good \$ & funding} unfold, all of us will be under ^{but dist & force go both} greater demand for services. We will need to find ways of avoiding duplication of effort, wheel-spinning, and unproductive conflict. Let's help each other stay up to date and devise positive ways to move ahead.

→ The time is now to communicate more clearly, more fully, to more people. The voluntary program in which we all believe so strongly is threatened if we cannot demonstrate anew that it really is needed and does work.

The first step is to be sure of our facts. Soil surveys are the base--and we will speed their completion. Vegetative studies, erosion and sediment inventories, and land-use studies will help. So will water-quality studies and data collection for watershed and RC&D projects.

Then we must communicate with each other about those resource facts and about how and where to make use of them in motivating landowners, legislatures, and planning agencies.

- 6 -

*Working
together*

We have been the finest partners in government--but we still can do better at keeping each other informed.

Then we must be ~~a~~ little more aggressive, ~~a~~ little more persistent, ~~a~~ little more clear and interesting in telling our several publics about conservation needs and accomplishments. There ~~will be~~ ^{is} no better time to speak out for understandable, practical, and observable conservation on the land. There ~~will be~~ ^{is} no more urgent time to speak out to those who have never heard our message or who never had a chance to express their ideas.

The time is now to make our conservation package clear and uncomplicated. Are we giving the district cooperator only as much as he wants and needs to get a conservation system applied on his land? Or does paperwork and red tape pile up ^{to} slow down progress and turn off the cooperator?

SCS ~~has been~~ ^{is} working to reduce the size and complexity of the conservation plan. * We are not reducing the importance of planned conservation systems. Conservation still has to be more than a loose-*safeteria* collection of individual practices ^{if they are} to be effective and economical. But the conservation plan should be only a useful tool, not ~~a fancy~~ ^{the} end product. → *i.e. to solve the problem on the LAND*

try to We ~~are~~ ^{try to} reducing paperwork in other areas of SCS activity so that more time of our field staffs can be spent on the land and in the meeting halls rather than in the office making or checking reports. We welcome your ideas and your shared commitment in streamlining every part of our mutual assignment.

- 7 -

The time is now to ^{make} sure conservation practices or systems are installed and maintained. A conservation improvement on paper is not worth much. To help the landowner, his property, or our environment, it needs to be in place on the land, kept in working order, and as up to date as research and experience can make it. [A broken-down terrace or a grassed waterway that has lost its strong vegetative cover may be worse for the land and for water quality than no terrace or waterway at all. A watershed structure cannot do its job without regular housekeeping and without soil and water conservation fully applied on the land that drains toward the structure.]

You need to help all landowners and project sponsors understand their responsibility toward completed practices and do their full share. It will take some follow-through. It is obvious that you are following through in Florida, because several of your most important conservation practices showed healthy increases in our "on-the-land" figures. Keep up the excellent work!

> The time is now to be sure we have the cooperation of all who can offer dollars, ideas, or support. More people than ever--including ~~President Carter~~--are concerned about the future of agriculture, energy, and the environment. At the same time, they are concerned just as much about the size of government and the volume of government spending. SCS may have some more money and more assignments in the future, but probably not very many more people. You already have helped get more support from state and local units of government, from private organizations, and from a host of individuals who are interested but never knew the need before.

- 8 -

As we get a broader spectrum of interests involved and participating in soil and water conservation, we will move faster and in better, newer directions.

We may find the road a little easier, the satisfaction a little steadier, and the Nation a little stronger. We may get far more "mileage per dollar" in all of our work.

Finally The time is now to use a rifle approach to conservation. We cannot do it all, all at once, for all people...even with more support from others. Conservation districts need to take the lead in setting and updating priorities for conservation action. You are doing a good job. The more systematically you balance your programs, and the more ~~doggedly~~ you attend to the important items in your programs, the better results you will have and the better your reputation and support will be. Your new committee structure and your new spirit in district activity should

renew
~~give you some~~ confidence in Florida's *future*,

Some acres, some landowners in every district are in more urgent need of conservation assistance than others. You need to find and work with them. We will try to help with our erosion inventories and other data aimed at helping find the problem acres. We have our "first cut" on a nationwide and regional inventory on soil losses. We are beginning the next phase of compiling statewide data. Bills now at the Congress, H.R. 75 and S. 106, would put these and other separate studies into an overall comprehensive land and water conservation program that could better keep track of trends and problems and report to the people who can do something about them.

- 9 -

It will be up to you, and the individuals and groups you interface with, to use the data that SCS and other agencies pull together. With Florida's comprehensive planning act and your own district long-range programs, I am confident you will make effective use of all the facts that roll out of anybody's computer or off of anybody's press.

America has tremendous resources. They do have limits. They are closely dependent on one another. President Carter has said, "My Administration is committed to a policy of effective stewardship of our public lands and natural resources. That policy includes conservation, multiple use of resources, and a reluctance to disrupt natural ecosystems. At a time when it has become apparent that we can no longer afford the waste and misuses of any natural resources, the need for these steps is clear." USDA and conservation districts will be in the forefront of the move to turn this new leadership into action and programs.

I am convinced you will make Florida's natural resources really work effectively for your people. In doing so, you will aid all of America and many other nations. Have some good discussions, and take the new ideas home and do something with them.

The quality of life in Florida can be made even better.

#