

RESOURCE CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT: CHANGE AND CHALLENGE

I welcome this opportunity to join you. I am deeply concerned about your problems. I want to be closely associated with your progress and the dreams for the future of the 163 soil conservation districts in California and the 3,000 in our land.

Words are the legitimate weapons of civilized man facing the issues of his time. Your podium, as I see it, provides for a timely discussion of vital issues.

This is the time to speak for the unity of the countryside in all its values and uses. It is the time to advocate the protection and development of our resources as a whole, in accordance with their capabilities and the goals of the community. It is a time to speak for action that will meet the oncoming demands of a growing Nation. It is a time to forestall premature and disorderly commitments of resource use.

We find ourselves in an age demanding instant satisfaction of ill-considered demands--often hypocritically made in the name of progress and society. Therefore, I believe it is a time to come forward, to be heard. It is a time to assist conservation district governing boards to assume fully their responsibilities of leadership in soil, in water, and in related conservation work.

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Address by Norman A. Berg, Deputy Administrator for Field Services, Soil Conservation Service, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C., at the Twenty-first Annual Convention of the California Association of Soil Conservation Districts, Fresno, California, December 1, 1966.

In a steel mill a great bar of steel was suspended vertically by a delicate chain. Nearby a bottle cork was suspended by a silk thread. Could the small cork held only by a fragile thread set the steel bar into motion? The cork was swung gently against the steel bar. The bar remained motionless. But this was repeated again and again. In ten minutes the bar gave some evidence of feeling uncomfortable, and a "nervous chill" ran over it. Then ten minutes later the chill was followed by a tremor of vibration. At the end of an hour the great bar was swinging like a pendulum in concert with the tiny cork.

How many "potential" leaders "give up the ghost" and desert their goal because they stopped just before a "nervous chill" ran over their bar of steel?

There is an old Greek proverb that says, "Before you score, you must have a goal." Our goal is that the Nation's future lies in rural America. The vast countryside can offer relief from the teeming cities and their congested suburbs--provide ample land and water to serve the expanding needs of commerce and industry, and broad acres on which to build garden communities for tomorrow's generations.

If we act with wisdom--in time!

We have become, in my lifetime, a nation of city-dwellers. Each day and each year, more and more Americans concentrate in the towns, cities, and suburbs. To them life naturally centers where they work, make their homes--raise their families. And from these centers of population emerge a pattern of mutual interests, problems, and understanding. A kinship is growing up among these people of Albuquerque and Atlanta, of Baltimore and Boston, of Pittsburgh and Philadelphia, of Salt Lake City and San Francisco.

This kinship derives from such typically metropolitan concerns as transportation, housing, crime, schools, and recreation.

What then happens to the countryside? Increasingly, it becomes an obstacle in time and space--merely landscape separating cities. It is to many--far too many--a land in between" to be crossed as quickly as possible via superhighways, fast trains or faster planes. Among this new and urban oriented generation, there is danger that the land in between will be regarded increasingly as just "undeveloped" space.

The American countryside--that expanse of nature separating our cities and towns and rural hamlets--represents the land we have left to grow in, play in, and build on the American dream.

That is all we have; and when divided and divided again for the multiple needs of a Nation growing rapidly in population, in urban development, in highway mileage, in an array of man-oriented uses alien to nature, this natural landscape that once seemed so limitless shrinks before us at every turn--and we are made aware of the challenging crisis in the countryside.

May I take a moment to commend each of you for the excellent progress in the soil and water conservation work that you share.

I understand that the outstanding accomplishment in soil and water conservation from the standpoint of public interest in California for 1966 has been the reorienting of the conservation programs to deal with broad framework planning at the watershed, county, basin and regional levels, as well as the conventional individual farm and ranch planning. This has called for the development of new procedures, criteria, and guidelines for generalizing soil and water resource information generalized interpretive resource maps so that planners can see the broad resource picture needed for long-range land and water use planning.

The SCS and soil conservation districts are gaining recognition from local governments, city and county planning commissions, and State and Federal agencies as a source of resource information needed for orderly land-use planning for agriculture, recreation, wildlife, industrial, urban and other uses. Work with regional planning interests and on river basin surveys in demonstrating the ability of the SCS technicians and the effectiveness of these new techniques in motivating the landowners and the public in resource conservation and development. General soil and interpretive maps, prepared by the SCS and districts, are sought after by local, county, and regional planning groups. These groups are providing increasing amounts of funds to accelerate interpretive maps and interim publications.

This is a timely development. The histories of both the SCS and the SCD's have been a continuing response to new challenges as our times and problems change. As new problems appeared districts have moved to help solve these problems. At first districts worked mostly with individual farmers and ranchers. Next came work with groups. Later, programs expanded to include whole communities or regions--in watershed or resource conservation and development projects and in planning and ever growing programs.

Yes, indeed, times change, our problems change and our boundaries of concern are widened. Not necessarily because we want it this way, but because it is this way.

During our lifetime, many of us are being asked to do something for the Nation in our area of special competence. Young men and women join the Peace Corps and give what they have, which is time and energy. Millionaires set up foundations and give money. Your field of special competence is your knowledge of the land. I suggest that using this knowledge of the land, for the people, can be a very valuable contribution to your country.

The basic concept of conservation is the wise use and protection of the land both today and tomorrow. So let's take a brief look at our national tomorrow and see what changes will occur.

One of the basic facts of tomorrow's America is that we have many more people. By 1975 there will be an estimated 223 to 230 million people. By the year 2000 we shall have between 338,000,000 and 350,000,000. That is, during the second half of the 20th century, it appears highly probable that we shall add 200,000,000 persons to the population of the United States.





"At the present time we are losing the equivalent of 400,000 acres of good land a year from erosion and other forms of soil deterioration,

"More than a billion dollars a year in flood damages still is lost in the Nation's upstream watersheds.

"Sediment damage in upstream areas costs \$87½ million a year--most of which could be prevented by small watershed projects.

"These are shameful statistics that point to impending national catastrophe unless they are reversed. You, the Nation's leaders in soil and water conservation, are acutely aware of the calamitous potential that is present. And I am aware of your efforts to avert the danger, and am grateful to you for them."

Rural America is also changing. Only 6 out of 20 Americans live in rural areas, and only 25 percent of rural residents themselves are farmers. So there are a lot of people owning land in rural America who aren't too familiar with conservation practices.

So, in the future, we will have more people, more demands on the land, and less agricultural land. Urbanization may not have reached Nevada in hurricane force, but its effects will be very much present. Because, as other land goes into nonfarm use, the remaining agricultural land must feed more people. Thus, urbanization in California or New York affects Nevada, New Mexico, and North Carolina farms, too.

We have enough land, for our immediate future, anyway, if we use it wisely. But we can't continue to remove millions of acres from agricultural production forever and not pay for it sometime in higher food costs and lower quality.

We need new suburbs and industrial developments. We also need to retain much of our prime farmland. We can do both--if we plan urban growth and other land changes in consideration of our national needs and the land's capabilities. But we have to plan--now--while there is some time left.

I don't think most urban Americans realize how much their standard of living depends on efficient farming. Our farmers and ranchers have produced the world's greatest agricultural success story--unequaled anywhere else on earth. But our farmers can't keep pulling production miracles, like rabbits, out of a silk hat forever, especially when the silk hat--our agricultural land and water base--keeps getting smaller.

Right today, the competing demands of resource users are running into each other. In some areas of the country, there isn't enough water to satisfy industry, recreation, irrigation, and home use. Who gets priority--and on what basis? What if an industrial company, a housing developer, a city recreation department and highway officials all want the same land? Again, who gets priority? We had better decide before the bulldozer gets there because once that soil is ripped up and urbanization takes over, the land is quite literally set in a concrete pattern and that's the end of it for agricultural use.



This raises the question--who should make the plans for land and water use and conservation? I suggest that soil conservation districts should have a major role.

I know this is a subject with more questions than answers. But before we consider some of these questions, I'd like to quote the National Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts on the future of districts.

A recent NACD statement suggests that districts have four major challenges facing them.

First, districts--and I quote, . . ."must equip themselves to meet the demands for orderly resource development in an age of increasing requirements for land, water, and space."

Second, . . . "They must secure and provide the needed technical, financial, and other services necessary to move ahead with the job."

Third, . . . "They must confront the fact the resource programs of the future need to be developed in terms that our vast urban population can understand and support."

And fourth, . . . "They must invent new operating machinery that will not only meet the basic needs of farmers and other landowners but also satisfy community development needs and provide a framework for greater participation in resource matters,"

I support these objectives. I know there are some questions, and certainly some difficulties; but I think these four points are the signposts of the future. Times have changed since the 1930's and so have the needs

of our land. We learned how to slow down the dust, how to adapt to dry land farming, and better range techniques. Now we've got to add new knowledge of how to conserve land that is threatened by unwise use, water pollution and new forms of erosion caused by urbanization.

Let's consider a few questions that the NACD proposals raise. First, should districts serve only farmers and ranchers or should they serve both land resource owners and users? I support the NACD concept that districts should include more segments of the local community.

A flood doesn't stop at the edge of town. The same river that floods main street will flood nearby farms. Polluted water from the same source will be used by both the banker's wife and the farmer's wife. You, and the banker and lawyer will all pay higher food prices and higher taxes for road repair work when the wrong land is used for the wrong purpose, or when floods wash over roads and farms.

I suggest that conservation district supervisors might well consider their programs not farm programs alone, but land and water programs. Of course, many of you already do that. You realize that farm and ranch conservation work is as important as ever, but a whole new series of conservation problems have sprung up through more intensified land use. You learned earlier that farming on the plains was different from farming in the humid East or the mountainous Far West, and you adapted to this particular land. Well, the same knowledge of the differences in land, and the necessity of using the land for its best purposes is beginning to come clear to many urban land users today; and they are looking for guidance.

Some districts may feel they are not equipped to lead such an expanded land conservation job. But consider this. Who is better equipped? Who knows more about the land in your area? Who already has the organizational machinery, the skill, and the long experience in land use problems? In short, you are the experts.

You may forget how limited your kind of knowledge is among urban people because you deal with land all the time. In many areas, urban, county and city officials are asking for district help in land conservation.

I want to briefly review progress in Resource Conservation and Development projects as only one example of advancement in conservation. I could discuss many other facets, But it shows what can be done,

It shows that our concept of conservation has been growing and taking new form,

The six new RC&D projects bring the total up to 26 approved for planning or operations since we started the program early in 1964. It speaks well of the soil and water conservation leadership that so many have been started in so short a time,

The Resource Conservation and Development Projects offer one of our best opportunities to step up soil and water conservation programs in meeting today's urgent need. These projects represent a new approach to assisting rural areas in the full development and multiple use of land and water resources to create new jobs, new recreation areas, and to increase rural income opportunities.

RC&D is broadening our programs of assistance to soil and water conservation districts,

It is accelerating the small watershed program and emphasizing multi-purpose development watershed projects.

It is assisting in recreational developments on private lands.

It is emphasizing beautification of the countryside.

It is creating better rural facilities, such as ample water supplies, so that industry will be attracted to rural areas.

It is helping eliminate the causes of rural poverty.

It is strengthening the family farm pattern of agriculture.

It is establishing a reservoir of experience which the developing Nations of the world--largely rural and agrarian--can adapt.

It is helping make rural America a place where millions more of our citizens can live and work and play.

#### Application for Assistance in RC&D Projects in Nevada and California

Two of the sponsoring soil conservation districts, Vya of Nevada and Surprise Valley of California investigated the RC&D project approach as it would apply to their previously envisioned "range renewal" project. Actually they found it the mechanism to attain full community participation' in developing the application for the North Cal-Nevada project. The area of consideration was broadened to include the Gerlach SCD of Nevada and the Gooselake SCD of California. It brought to light many problems that can be solved by community action but were not considered in detail in the "range renewal" efforts.

An RC&D project application has been submitted to the Secretary of Agriculture sponsored by the four soil conservation districts and the counties of Washoe in Nevada and Modoc in California.

Favorable endorsements have been received from the Governors of Nevada and California, the legislative bodies of both States as well as local organizations and groups.

The steering committee, made up of one representative from each of the six sponsors under the leadership of Dave Tidwell, chairman of the Surprise Valley SCD, very effectively has worked to insure that the project has full local support and that local initiative for action is genuine.

#### Nationwide Progress and Concepts Developed

Experience in the pilot work we have seen since 1963 is encouraging.

Stated in its simplest terms the resource conservation and development concept is that of local people initiating and carrying forward a program of action for resource conservation, development, and utilization in an area to provide additional economic opportunities to its people.

The policy of the U. S. Department of Agriculture is to cooperate with and assist local sponsors in developing and carrying out plans for Resource Conservation and Development Projects. The Food and Agriculture Act of 1962 provided authority for these projects. Other authorities already assigned the Department and other agencies provide needed assistance.

#### The Project Approach

The keys to success in resource conservation and development projects are (1) local leadership, and (2) teamwork between public agencies assisting the project sponsors.



Local leadership organizes and directs the technical and financial resources of all participants to carry out the project plan. All segments of the community--rural, suburban, and urban--can coordinate their activities toward a unified approach in meeting local problems and improving resource use. Often, the very act of taking stock of resources and planning together for their use stimulates people to carry out measures on their own.

The "project" approach has advantages over the usual program basis of most USDA activities in which services are available nationwide to eligible participants.

The project approach limits the area, gives sharp focus to use of funds and authorities, and concentrates the effort. Local leadership is most effective because its influence and interest are centered in the project area.

Coordinated effort by local interests and all Federal, State, and local agencies results in a truly comprehensive project plan for each area.

#### Common Objectives

All projects have in common--land, water, and other resource potentials that will significantly improve the area economy. The twenty-six projects in planning or operation have as objectives to greater or less degree the kinds of improvements named here. Yet each project is different in resources, in problems, and in approaches in solving problems.



1. Water resource development for flood prevention, improved land use, fish, recreation, wildlife, domestic, agricultural, municipal, or industrial use. All the projects include one or more small watershed projects (Public Law 566).
2. Accelerated conservation planning and treatment of all lands in the area--cropland, pasture, range, forest and woodland, wildlife, recreation and other uses.
3. New farm enterprises and improved management to better farm family income.
4. Conversion of cropland to grass, trees, wildlife, and recreation use.
5. Recreation developments through multiple use of land and water, using existing resources and creating new ones.
6. New industries to process agricultural and woodland or specialty products.
7. Improved marketing of agricultural and livestock products.
8. Creation of and location of new industries to provide new jobs and income.
9. A wide range of community services to improve health, education, and living conditions in the area.
10. Long-range planning that will coordinate public efforts in the area.

#### Size of Project Area

Project areas are of a size which will permit development of the natural resources resulting in economic improvement and community betterment but still small enough for local leadership to be effective and for a plan to be developed in a reasonable time.

They usually have similar problems, needs, and opportunities for conservation, improvement, development of the area's resources or need for expanded resource use. Also considered are the opportunities for major and rapid progress in meeting local needs to achieve economic improvement.

#### Sponsorship of RC&D Projects

Resource conservation and development projects may be sponsored by legal, public organizations such as conservation districts, special purpose districts, municipalities, towns, counties, and local and State agencies.

#### Highlights of Activities

More than 600 measures have been activated in the first ten projects-- about 150 more in the second ten. These measures cover a wide range of activities to conserve, develop, and improve natural resources, provide additional employment, improve public facilities and better community life. In addition to these specific actions taken, many other allied steps are in process to further the rural areas development concept.

The project measures now completed or essentially completed will provide several hundred new jobs by 1970. An additional several hundred man-years of continuing annual employment is expected to be created after installation of measures underway or to be started in 1966.

Accelerated services provided by RC&D funds and from other sources have been a major factor in stepping up resource developments. These include accelerated technical assistance in conservation planning, forestry, cost-sharing, and CCP help, step-up of loan activities, educational and related activities. About 200 full- and part-time employees are engaged in assisting local sponsors in this effort.

Specific progress on measures indicates that 147 are completed or partly completed; 456 are in the process of planning and installation is underway on 108. More than 200 measures are scheduled for installation in the fiscal year 1967. Survey, design, and planning, as well as financing details must be completed before these measures can be installed. Priority for carrying forward project measures is determined by local people.

Multipurpose water developments completed, being installed, and in process of planning, account for more than one-fourth of total measures. These developments will provide water for recreation, wildlife, and other purposes and for flood protection. These serve as a base for further enterprises which create employment.

A total of 32 watersheds have been completed, under installation, planned, or contemplated under P. L. 566 in Projects. These will have tremendous impact in improving local economies. RC&D has greatly increased watershed interest and activities.

Recreation developments that are completed or in progress total 97. These are both public and privately owned and furnish additional income as well as help expand recreation and tourism services.

Agricultural water management--irrigation and drainage measures total 80. These are making possible increased income to family farms in the New Mexico, Wisconsin, and other projects.

Agricultural processing, marketing and wood-using industries are providing markets for resource products and employment in factories and mills. At least 35 such measures are completed or in process of development.

Other new industries have been attracted to project areas. These total eleven with many others under consideration.

A few of the many other categories of project measures include:

1. Public Services - 35  
Hospitals, schools, sewage, training, and related health and community services
2. Special Resource Studies - 19  
These are aimed to provide better utilization or marketing of resource products
3. Industrial Parks and Other Development Centers - 10  
These are attracting industries, housing, and other centers

This work exemplifies that <sup>a</sup>rural and limited soil conservation concept will no longer suffice in a society that has become increasingly urban, a society in which the interests of the users of resources have become equal to those of the owners of resources.

Regardless of whether you ever have an RC&D project, the needs are more than evident. There is need, for example, to re-identify the resource assets of each community, county, and conservation district to project the probable demands that will be made on these resources and to guide the development and use of these same resources along wise and orderly by-lines.

There is need to develop a countryside purpose--to identify the principles and goals of the countryside and to make them known.

There is need for leadership in conservation districts, in farm organizations and chambers of commerce--among conservationists, tradesmen, bankers, and newsmen--to identify the array of new issues now facing the countryside and the soil, and devise constructive programs for dealing with them.

The key to the new approach in a nutshell seems to be that of involving more people in resource work, of extending district services to additional people, of placing more emphasis on broad-based resource planning, and at the same time continuing the original purpose of the district as an effective local action organization to get as much total conservation on the land as fast as possible!

This is a fortunate development, for there is evidence that if districts do not assume these responsibilities and carry out truly active and comprehensive natural resource programs that meet today's needs, somebody else will and should!

In many cases, conservation districts could perform some of the work being taken on by the new groups, the result being less duplication, better coordination, and a more efficient and useful program. But if this is to be so, districts must take the initiative. It is not a case of taking on responsibilities already being performed effectively by others; but rather digging into the work that remains undone, and which needs to be done.

Our job is land use and conservation, and it is our job whether the new crop on the land is barley or buildings.

In view of the changing nature of some land uses, should conservation districts face these problems, or should new organizations be formed? In my view, districts are the best answer. You are a going organization of size and vitality. You have a body of technical data and experience not equaled in any similar organization. You have working relationships with many other agencies. You have moved forward and responded to new needs.



with vigor. You have outstanding local conservation leaders--the 15-thousand supervisors, directors and commissioners like yourselves represent a remarkable involvement by citizens in their country.

The challenge that lies ahead is an exciting one. Whether it will be met depends on local district leadership--it does not depend on the NACD, the State associations, the State Soil and Water Conservation Committees, the Soil Conservation Service, or any of the other agencies with whom they work. Local leadership is the key to moving ahead; and the opportunities are restricted only by the state of people's minds. Our role is the traditional one--that of guidance and counsel.

The new America offers the same opportunities for resource management that it always has--and they are the continuing and valid objectives of the district movement: conservation, development, and self-government.

What will this mean now--and in the future--to the Soil Conservation Service? Frankly, we don't know yet. But we have some ideas. In the past we have considered soil, water, and related resources basically in terms of agriculture and farming. These remain of the utmost importance. But today people look to resource development to fulfill more basic needs--to create more jobs and increase their economic opportunities and improve their environment so beauty can be a daily experience.

In Chicago a few months ago Secretary Freeman said,

"No longer can there be separate compartments in the conservation world--no compartment for soil conservation apart from beauty preservation, no longer a wall between wildlife protection and agricultural conservation, no longer a forestry objective separate from the interests of



the grasslands, no longer a policy question as to multiple use of water resources and, finally, no more a disunity between city and open country. . .

"The true conservationist of today sees the union of resources and values on which humanity depends, and he would preserve that union! He sees the world of conservation as one world."

We have a big job ahead. Our land boundaries from sea to sea remain the same. Our land uses change. It is our enlarged job to help see that these changing land adjustments are right for the land and for our people. Because of your experience and past record, you will inevitably be leaders in this field. I hope you accept that leadership for what it is: a recognition of your past accomplishments, an acknowledgment of your skill and dedication, and a hope and belief you will go forward vigorously.

On behalf of the Administrator of the Soil Conservation Service, I pledge our continued help to the limit of funds and abilities. I congratulate everyone of you on your past achievements; I commend you for your present activities, and I wish you godspeed in your work for the future.