



# Soil Conservation

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## Well-Qualified Beginners in Conservation

From the Administrator

A little over 2 years ago, with no fanfare, the Soil Conservation Service assumed an important, nationwide responsibility to rate and certify professional conservationists at entry grade levels.

SCS took over this task at the request of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) in September 1977, due to a growing awareness that SCS possessed the requisite expertise to carry out this national responsibility and was in the best position to determine the qualifications of potential employees.

The Special Examining Unit (SEU) set up in the National Office to carry out this duty has since racked up a steady, enviable record of accomplishments. The largest unit of its kind outside OPM, it has become a model for other agencies.

New procedures and additional rating criteria were established for soil conservationists, soil scientists, and range conservationists at the entry grade levels. The added criteria reflect the knowledge, skills, and ability required for these positions and place emphasis on the broadest academic background in plant, soil, water, and animal sciences.

The SEU has trained as raters approximately 200 conservation professionals located throughout the Nation.

Some 9,200 well-qualified individuals had been referred to employing officials in SCS and the Forest Service and in the Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Department of the Interior—the major users of the service—by the end of fiscal year 1979; and a total of 1,549 individuals had been selected for positions.

Registers are computerized, making them more quickly accessible.

Selecting officials are notified when registers get low, so that they can accelerate recruiting activities.

Conservation districts benefit when SCS and other agencies can meet staffing needs better and faster. Districts also can benefit more directly, by requesting referral lists of eligible applicants to meet their own staffing needs.

The young people who are eager to begin a conservation career obviously benefit from the streamlined system, too.

We look forward to even greater accomplishments and assistance from the SEU as it continues its third year of operations. We fully expect it to make significant contributions to coping with the many, diverse conservation challenges that SCS and districts together face in the "Action Eighties."

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Norm Berg". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned at the bottom of the page, below the main body of text.

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### Cover:

While watching the 1980 Winter Olympics in Lake Placid, N.Y., this month, few people will think of the conservation measures that were needed on the snow-covered hills. (See article beginning on page 4. Front cover photo courtesy of the Lake Placid Olympic Organizing Committee.)