

## THE END OF THE BEGINNING

Since my boyhood days on a farm in Minnesota, I have served the cause of soil and water conservation in many places, including four years in the late fifties next door in South Dakota. It seems that each assignment has taken me to a larger urban area, to the point where it's hard to be sure that I still think from and could speak for a rural viewpoint.

It helps to have the chance--and I don't get it often enough!--to come out and see what the real America is like and see how the conservation work that we talk about in Washington, and that we total up in Washington, is really put on the land by the people whose livelihood the land is.

It is a pleasure to step aside once in a while from the problems of conservation--and I don't get to do it often enough!--and recognize just how much local people with a little help from government agencies can accomplish in resource improvement. I know you may feel it took you a long time to complete the Upper Deer Creek-Lake Hendricks Watershed Project, with the delays and the paperwork and the persuasion that are part of a complex natural resource project. But you have kept at it--and nine years and \$800,000 and uncounted amounts of persistence later, you have brought to your corner of Minnesota and South Dakota a new level of resource protection that makes the effort worthwhile.

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Material for talk by Norman A. Berg, Associate Administrator, Soil Conservation Service, at the dedication of the Upper Deer Creek-Lake Hendricks Watershed Project, Lincoln County, Minnesota, August 2, 1975.

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Well over four-fifths of the 36,000 acres are protected from soil erosion. The floodwater-retarding structure has helped stabilize the level of Lake Hendricks, which serves to greatly improve recreation and fishing, and to enhance wetland habitat for wildlife below the lake. I understand the "sediment pool" behind the structure is a popular resting site during migration of waterfowl. In all, the project already is working better than the watershed board of managers--and SCS--expected at this stage.

Your project has already cut flood damage to farmland, roads, and town property by more than \$20,000 a year. When the weather acts up again as it did in Minnesota and several other states last spring, you will be ready.

You represent one of only 400 watershed projects that have been completed in the country, out of nearly 3,000 areas that have asked for watershed project help from USDA. I'm sure that local communities in Minnesota and South Dakota working on the nearly 50 other projects that are in the process of planning or installation will derive some inspiration from your effort. So show it off! And keep it maintained in a way that the project stays effective and can adapt to changes in the community.

Many people in Minnesota and elsewhere became believers in soil and water conservation after last spring's flood damages were tallied. There has been considerable concern that the recent all-out drive to increase food and fiber production might force sound conservation practices aside. You are helping keep a balance between production and conservation.

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To the conservation districts involved, your leaders and cooperators, thank you!

Your watershed project gives me renewed confidence in the continued vitality and the broad capability of the soil and water conservation program. Local people can formulate their own natural resource and other community goals; work out their own plans for achieving those goals; and most importantly translate those plans into meaningful action on the land.

The aim of the Soil Conservation Service has been to provide the technical assistance you need to make meaningful choices and get conservation measures installed. We'll continue to provide the best help we can.

But it's your project and your community and your conservation district programs. There are many sources of support for your programs, many potential allies...farm organizations...women's groups...youth groups...business firms and industry...environmental groups...county and state agencies of several kinds. All of them use land, and you can help them do so intelligently. All of them may have helpful ideas or financial aid in your activities. Tap them!

Your creativity, your expertise, your energy are needed more today than when your watershed project was created...than when the Soil Conservation Service was created. I know you will sustain these qualities and will do your best to keep soil and water where they can do the most good for people, for wildlife, and for the food crops that sustain both.

Best wishes in meeting your future challenges.

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