

The National Outlook

For

SCS - USDA

I consider it a high privilege to be able to participate in your conference.

The recently retired President of Harvard University, Dr. Nathan Pusey, has said, "We live in a time of such rapid change and growth of knowledge that only he who is in a fundamental sense a scholar--that is, a person who continues to learn and inquire--can hope to keep pace, let alone play the role of guide."

Change is the word of the day--rapid change in almost every corner of the Nation... Physical change... Change in people's attitudes, values, and priorities... Accelerating change. And this means that there must be change in the needs and the work of Conservation Districts and the SCS.

Consider these U. S. forecasts for the year 2000 or beyond:*

(1) Population will be somewhere between 250 million and 360 million--that's quite a spread. It certainly reflects uncertainty about trends for the future. It's about 206 million now--we grew by over 3,000,000 last year.

*Note: These forecasts represent the best indications available from many sources on the likely setting in which the SCS and other agencies will have to work. They should not, however, be considered SCS projections of developments that may or may not take place in our society.

Material for remarks by Norman A. Berg, Associate Administrator, SCS, USDA at a conference of SCS Conservationists, Huron, South Dakota, March 21, 1972.

A presidential commission strongly suggested (March 12, 1972) that America must slow down or even stop its population growth or face an increasingly "contrived and regulated" future.

The suggestion is contained in the first part of the final report of the Commission on Population Growth and the American Future, established by Congress and appointed by the President two years ago.

The report, in a sense, marks the official debut of the population control as a national political issue.

The 24-member commission, headed by John D. Rockefeller III, said that its purpose was "to modernize demographic behavior in this country," to "Make population, and all that it means, explicit on the national agenda."

It asked whether a population slowdown would produce an economic slowdown, something many businessmen believe, and whether it would endanger national security.

The commission looked into the "energy crisis" widely forecast for the future, the likelihood of a water shortage, what the food supply will be, whether food prices will go up, and how a growing population affects air pollution.

It dealt with the probable effects of population stabilization on poverty and blacks and the elderly, on the family and the labor force, and even on the "quality of life."

Its conclusion:

"We have found no convincing argument for continued national growth."

"On the contrary, the pluses seem to be on the side of slowing growth and eventually stopping it altogether."

(2) However, under present conditions for predictions: The Nation's Gross National Product may leap 600 to 700 percent by the year 2020.

It grew nearly 100 billion last year.

(3) We will consume more than twice as much in agricultural products.

(4) Demand for industrial timber products and pulpwood will double.

(5) Farms and ranches, of course, will be larger in average size, smaller in number.

(6) Water needs for major uses will triple.

(7) More than half of the acreage expected to move out of farm use in the next 50 years will be used for building sites or transportation.

(8) Annual flood damages may reach \$2 billion in upstream areas.

(9) Municipal waste loads will more than double.

(10) We'll need construction or rehabilitation of 26 million housing units.

(11) Family purchasing power will be two-thirds higher.

(12) Annual working hours will be shortened nearly 10 percent; and recreation demands will triple.

I think you'll agree that these forecasts indicate there is an atmosphere of continued heavy resource demand, and therefore a big job ahead for SCS and conservation districts.

Because of the need to get with it, the "District Outlook" NACD special committee--on which I have served as SCS representative from day one--developed recommendations that districts across the country are busy implementing. SCS has now developed a Long-Range Framework Plan. These two efforts and plans dovetail perfectly.

We will continue to help each other implement the recommendations in each document and on that basis districts and the SCS can continue to be a real conservation force in the years to come.

Our Framework Plan lists 67 major goals, all directed toward the attainment of three basic SCS long-range mission objectives: 1) The achievement of quality in the natural resource base, 2) in the environment, and 3) in the standard of living.

There are two areas of the plan which foresee such a significant change in emphasis for the Soil Conservation Service that I would like to tell you about them today. (This is not to de-emphasize the Plan's other facets).

The first of these is the expansion of our knowledge of natural renewable resources through more complete and accurate surveying and monitoring. We need much better data on the extent, condition, and rate of change of soil, water, and related resources.

We are convinced that you and district leaders and their cooperators have training and experience second to none in appraising the State of our soil and water resources. You also have the ability to look at the supply and condition of our soil and water to determine the impact on those resources when a new force or change is interjected into the environment.

Our framework plan sets forth a number of specific goals in surveying and monitoring.

First, it calls for a soil survey of the Nation that is complete and current.

Second, it calls for systematic studies to produce basic resource data and interpretations for units of government, planners, and other people concerned with resource management.

Third, it calls for an expansion of our present Conservation Needs Inventory into a comprehensive system for monitoring the condition of our soil, water, and related resources.

Fourth, it proposes a sediment monitoring system that includes information on sediment sources, deposition, characteristics, and effects.

Fifth, it calls for even more timely and accurate snow-survey data.

I cannot over-emphasize the importance of expanded survey and interpretative activities. The need for more reliable data about our natural resources has never been more apparent than during the past few years, as a public debate has raged over the condition of our environment and what

to do about it. A number of the conflicts have not yet been resolved to the satisfaction of the general public simply because no one has the needed information on which to base an informed judgment.

A second area forecast for our program related to planning assistance. The districts and SCS are already up to their ears in planning work. Last year, nearly 23,000 units of State and local government asked for and received district and SCS assistance. We provided nearly 11,000 resource inventories and evaluations to government units. We counseled on land use and treatment of proposed sites for more than 2,000 schools, hospitals, sanitary landfills, and other public facilities.

The SCS framework plan anticipates a far greater demand for this sort of planning assistance in the Seventies and it sets forth several principles to guide our employees.

One principle calls for maximum citizen involvement. We have known for a long time that a successful conservation plan can be developed only when the farmer or rancher participates fully and makes the necessary decisions. Experience also confirms that plans for communities, townships, or counties--if they are going to be supported--must have local people participating from the very beginning. It is not our job as SCS employees to make decisions for local people, but rather to help local planners themselves to recognize the alternatives which confront their communities when they make resource decisions.

We also ask you to pay attention to the principle of interaction. This means simply that everything you do about resources interacts in some way with something else; it sets off a whole series of effects.

In one city, for example, there has been a deliberate emphasis on building high rise apartments to beat the high cost of providing utility services to detached single-family homes. But one unforeseen result of the confinement of apartment living has been a mass exodus to the country on weekends. This Friday-night migration, in turn, has led to problems of waste disposal and pollution at nearby lakes and campgrounds and to increased congestion on the highways, with accompanying increases in the weekend accident rate.

We hope that you can ^{of will} share your training and experience with local people to help minimize such unforeseen effects of planning decisions.

One of the most challenging tasks for both Conservation Districts and SCS is in communicating the facts about our program to a changing public in a changing American society. For years soil and water conservation was of interest chiefly to those people who were directly involved--the farmers and ranchers who were both the prime movers and the principal beneficiaries of the program. Support for SCS came from the people who worked with us on a day-to-day basis, and it is no exaggeration to say that our work was accepted with enthusiasm.

Today this acceptance is no longer universal. The unprecedented national concern over the environment has brought every resource agency and institution under searching public scrutiny. Every action with an impact on the environment is being carefully studied to determine whether or not it is truly in the public interest. This represents a basic change in the social environment in which we work, and we must learn to understand that and deal with it.

This is one reason for some of the controversies which have touched our program. Clearly, America's resource decisions are going to have to be based on solid information, instead of unfounded fears, guesswork, or wishful thinking. And I believe that Districts and the SCS should have a more significant role in obtaining that information and making it readily available.

The Framework Plan also focuses on the tasks that need to be done to improve and maintain all the resource management systems that make up our environment so that we can have and maintain a quality environment. It points up the effects and benefits that result from resource system improvements. And it discusses the kinds of technical action--in conservation needs, in watershed development, in Resource Conservation and Development--that SCS will need to concentrate on in the years ahead to help insure a highly quality environment.

In addition to broadening our activities in monitoring and inventorying resources, and improving our planning assistance, the Framework Plan also calls for:

- Adjusting our technology to changing conditions and to important concerns such as pollution control; and
- Working closely with conservation districts to make soil and water conservation principles and techniques a part of planning and regulatory standards used by state and local governments and private groups and organizations.

In my opinion, all of the elements of this Framework Plan give our agency an outstanding opportunity to contribute importantly in the years ahead to meeting the environmental improvement needs of this Nation.

And to a large extent, that opportunity rests with you.

It is you in the field who will determine the shape and success of the Soil Conservation Service tomorrow. Only two percent of SCS people and money are back there in Washington. Our work and our image are shaped right here.

Each of you has helped make the Service what it is today--
an agency with a proud past, and a very challenging and satisfying
present.

You can help us invent the future.

You already have been helping invent the future in your
everyday work assignments-- such as

1. Working to strengthen agriculture;
2. Working with governmental units on resource planning;
3. Developing centers for environmental learning outdoors;
4. Managing the soil as a big part of pollution-abatement
efforts;
5. Coping with increasing amounts of animal waste; and
6. Developing better conservation technology to meet
cooperators' needs in the 1970's.

I'd like to stress that our Service Plan will work--will help us to a strong role--but only if every SCS employee reads and understands it and helps implement it in every one of the 3,027 districts in the Nation.

You will need to help explain it to other employees, to other agencies and organizations, and to district leaders and cooperators.

How you help implement the Plan is most important. We can't make a plan that fits the situation in every work unit or area. You still have a responsibility to assess the total needs within your sphere of work and the resources you have to work with--and design the best conservation program you can that touches all the bases.

We must move ahead quickly in SCS to implement the Plan. Some of the priority items for FY '73 are: 1) discussing the plan with all SCS employees and district officials to achieve understanding of our goals; 2) reviewing how well our resources are oriented toward meeting the plan's objectives; 3) developing effective institutional arrangements; 4) developing and implementing an effective surveying and monitoring system; and 5) involving ourselves more aggressively in land-use planning activities at all levels of government.

In summary, the Plan states some present needs and gives some forecasts about what we think will be the future. Predicting the future is difficult business. You will need to use your own crystal ball based on trends and opportunities where you are, and above all, face the realities that unfold as you move along.

Nationally, here are a few of the realities that have unfolded recently:

You remember that last May, President Nixon requested adding \$40 million to our fiscal 1972 budget. The Congress agreed and boosted RC&D to 20 starts and boosted some other programs. As of the tenth of August, then, our outlook was more promising than in several years. It looked as if we could add about 1,200 badly needed men and women at the field level.

August 15 dawned and we and everyone else faced the inflation fight--freeze--budget and personnel restrictions. Later came Phase II. The payraise was welcome for most of us so at this moment, we're about where we were as an agency before May 1971. Of course, this is a matter that affects the whole government and not just SCS or USDA.

Our new style for a while will probably continue to be the "lean and hungry" look. Many companies and organizations have recently said, "We've found when we have to, a smaller number of us can still get out the wash. It may not be as pretty as it was before, but it still gets out on the line." This ties in to another concern called "reduction of average grade level." All agencies are being scrutinized for any evidence of bureaucratic empire building. The signals are clear--their stressing from top management that we simply can't afford to be as generous in staffing as we would like to be to meet the workload that districts ask us to consider. We are again calling for tight schedules, top priorities, and the hope that each of us can produce a little more.

Another recent reality--a positive one this time--is our new Secretary of Agriculture. Dr. Earl Butz is a friend of SCS. In his first week on the job, he spoke to USDA employees in Jefferson Auditorium. He held an open house for all employees near his office. He visited SCS and talked with us about our activities, major issues facing us, and our Framework Plan--and then shook hands with all our Washington Office employees and later sent each employee a picture of their meeting. He has held regular staff meetings with agency heads, and has met with the National Rural Development Committee. He is on our side--and he is very articulate and positive about SCS and districts.

Of course, the subject of reorganization is alive in the Administration and in Congress. The first proposals last year would have split SCS, with our water resource activities going to one department and the rest of us to another. This was changed to transfer SCS intact to the Water Resources Administration of the Department of Natural Resources. A later change was to retain a USDA, restructured to serve the farmers and remove "peripheral activities." SCS is one of those "peripheral activities."

But wherever our agency hangs its hat, our activities are not peripheral in any sense of the word. While the organizational charts are being turned inside out, the work you are doing in the field had better continue to be done:

- Conservation practices on the land
- Watershed and RC&D structures built and operating
- Soil surveys made and used
- Rural development needs given a major thrust

That last item is under national discussion, too. Rural development, like the environment, is a subject of growing attention and urgency throughout the Nation.

You need to assess what the rural development process is or should be in your State, area and county and help fill whatever the needs are.

Other realities include:

- National Land Use Policy

... Administration has re-emphasized its proposal this year and broadened it.

Example--siting of major airports and highways.

Any State not establishing acceptable policy by 1975 would be subject to penalties and loss of Federal funds.

- Rural Revenue Sharing

... Administration still considers this urgent legislation.

- Environmental Issues:

Channel improvement.

... See no letup in the attack from the environmentalists.

... They have the issue in the court in North Carolina.

- Public Access in water resource projects.

... Involves rights of private ownership and application of civil rights.

... It won't go away.

In the years ahead, then, the job of the Service will be a challenging one. It will call for employees who are skilled in the jobs we've always been called on to handle, and a lot of newer assignments.

We'll be asked to provide information for one farmer's land-use decisions, and at the same time we'll be working with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration to make use of data from an "Earth Resource Technology Satellite" that will photograph the world completely every two weeks or so.

We'll be helping one irrigator improve his efficiency of water use--and at the same time we'll be gathering snow survey information electronically from "snow pillows." They'll send daily radio signals from the high mountains to a central office and save our skiers a lot of difficult work in assessing the probable streamflow for the following spring.

We'll be making soil survey interpretations for agriculture--but we'll also assess how soils might do in holding, filtering, or breaking down solid wastes.

We'll be running off a few facts on the typewriter for a landowner--and at the same time we'll be asking a computer to lay out all the facts and plans on any 40-acre tract in the counties around a major metropolitan area.

Whatever we will be doing, on whatever front of environmental improvement or rural development, its success will depend on you--on your legwork, brainpower, and teamwork as professional conservationists. It will be a demanding role, but a satisfying one.

You'll need to use all the tools and knowledge at your command. You'll need to keep alert to new ideas and new technologies that can be adapted to serve our goals. You'll need to understand not only the science of conservation, but also the social and political processes that govern conservation action.

You'll need to be concerned with not only the immediate effects or benefits of the improvements you help put on the land, but the second and third-order effects of what you do. You'll need to stay on top of current issues.

Every one of us will need to accept a challenge of personal growth, of intellectual curiosity...of reading, of learning new things, of working with new people and new organizations. This is self-improvement. Its thrust, and its motivation, must come from within.

Every one of us will need to accept the challenge of reaching out to the individuals and organizations that need the information we can supply but don't know about its availability. We will need to help every citizen understand how soil and water conservation benefits him and how he can have a role in it if he wants to become involved personally.

My three decades of experience in USDA have convinced me that the SCS contains one of the finest groups of people in the country. Our dedication is widely acknowledged. We can take pride in the excellence of our work. We are proud of the degree of expertise we have and that we have developed.

Having said this, I should like to remind each of us that:

1. Whatever you and I do, know more about it than anyone else. Read, study, make notes, think. Develop your own personal library.
2. Whatever you and I do, spend more time doing it than anything else.
 - Work longer hours.
 - Take work home.
 - Tell others.
 - Write about it.
3. Put work first.
 - Ahead of everything but your wife and family.
 - Make a hobby of it.
4. Broaden knowledge.
 - Extend your study into related areas.
 - Listen to (and question) people who are doing work different from, or who probably know more than you do.
5. Evaluate experience.

- Ask "why?" about every experience you have.
- Keep an eye on results.
- Discard the worthless, the poor, the uncertain.
- Avoid things that don't work.
- Try for better experience.

6. Beat promotion opportunities to the punch. Look ahead, plan ahead, and study and work to get there.

7. Be ready:

- To convince others that you do indeed know what you are talking about, on the basis of fact.
- To be convinced of new ways of doing things, and of new ideas.
- To change your methods, your approach, your conclusions, on the basis of fact.
- To move, to another town, another State, another country, wherever there's opportunity. Better keep your wife informed and aware on this point.

8. Set goals.

- Think what you want to be doing next year, three years from now, ten years.
- Change your goals as you are convinced of the need to do so. Times are changing fast--watch your objectives,

but look before you leap. Worth citing here, I think, is a profound remark made by L. F. Urwick, foremost management authority in Great Britain. He said, "The history of other animal species shows that the most successful in the struggle for survival have been those which were most adaptable to change in their world."

Throughout our organization our people should feel an obligation and be encouraged to study and suggest improvements that may make the SCS better--in terms of efficiency, quality of work, improved service, lower costs, elimination of waste, red tape, unnecessary operations, and the like.

When an organization is characterized by such things as these, there are some results that can be measured. Productivity, for example, is high. Turnover is low. Costs are low. Morale is high. Acceptance by the public is high.

We think this describes the SCS. For example:

Our productivity per man is 10 to 20 times what it was twenty years ago. With due regard for inflation, our costs have gone down steadily the last 20 years--depending on what activity you're measuring. Acceptance by the public is at an all-time high. Turnover is low, lower than that of any other government agency. It stands at about 0.4% per month. Only one other organization of comparable size in the United States has a lower

turnover than ours. And with so few people leaving SCS, you can't say morale is low, or that dissatisfaction is more than minimal.

In terms of new ideas, new concepts, better methods, improved techniques, we can safely say, I think, that SCS stands high. I could cite numerous sources in the Washington complex as a basis for the statement that SCS is a leader in its field and is moving strongly and progressively with these times of change. With present reductions in funds resulting both from imposed constraints and inflation, I have noted no tendency anywhere to relax on the matter of improving our program operation, our expertise, or our management. In the meantime, our training is increasing.

In the matter of career development, the SCS career system unquestionably stands among the best in the Nation. The Administrator, his Associate, his Deputies, every State Conservationist, and every AC came up, as we say, "the hard way," that is they began their careers in a field office. They moved from one position to another with increasing responsibilities. Promotion from within, on merit, has been the policy we have followed for the life of the Service. To the best of my knowledge, SCS has done possibly more in this field of career development than any other Federal agency.

Finally:

We will need to work more closely with conservation districts and with the other agencies and organizations that are part of the conservation team.

We also will need to work more closely with many groups and individuals who do not share our viewpoint or our experience. Some of the newer environmental groups are philosophically opposed to certain aspects of our program, particularly channel improvement in watershed projects.

Calm and open discussion often seems difficult or impossible with members of some of these groups. But we cannot afford to give up in our efforts to communicate with these people. If we pull back from our critics, if we fail to talk with them and work with them and argue constructively with them, we are going to increase their suspicions and their animosity.

On the other hand, I am confident that positive information efforts and the best use of your well demonstrated talents for working with people will pay dividends in the long run. Those who have a sincere interest in environmental improvement and who understand your programs and your missions can become valuable allies.

Americans are concerned about the world they live in. You can help them understand the alternatives for improving their communities, the real costs and decisions necessary, and then help them get things done.

This is a major role. Let's have at it.

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