

**LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY FOR:****JUNE 30, 1997**

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**LAST WEEK:****HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE MARKUP OF FY98 APPROPRIATIONS -**

The Agriculture, Rural Development, FDA and Related Agencies Subcommittee (Chairman Skeen, R-N.M.) of the House Appropriation Committee held a markup of FY98 appropriations for the programs under its jurisdiction on June 25th. A summary of the subcommittee action is as follows (in thousands):

	<b>Request</b>	<b>Subcommittee Mark</b>	<b>Change from '97</b>
Conservation Operations	\$722,268	\$610,000	-\$9,961
Watershed Surveys and Planning	n/a	\$10,000	-\$2,381
Small Watersheds (P.L. 566)			
Technical Assistance	0	0	-\$52,036
Financial Assistance	\$40,000	\$101,036*	+\$67,036
Forestry Incentives Program	\$6,325	\$6,325	(Same)
RC&D	\$47,700	\$29,377	(Same)
Wetlands Reserve Program	\$163,579	\$163,579	+\$44,885
Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)	\$30,000	\$30,000	+\$10,000
EQIP	\$200,000	\$200,000	(Same)
Conservation Farm Option	\$15,000	\$15,000	+13,000
Farmland Protection Program	\$18,000	\$18,000	+\$16,000

\* Although the Budget Request separated Small Watershed financial assistance (\$40 million) and technical assistance (\$60 million in Conservation Operations), the Subcommittee funded the program solely through Small Watershed Account. The subcommittee also limited the amount of funding for technical assistance to \$50 million. This results in a \$10 million decrease in funding for watershed technical assistance from the proposed Budget.

Mark up by the full House Appropriations Committee of the draft legislation is tentatively set for July 9th.

**DAIRY INDEMNITY PROGRAM REAUTHORIZED**

On Thursday June 26, the House Agriculture Committee's Subcommittee on Livestock, Dairy, and Poultry, approved the reauthorization of the program that helps dairy farmers recoup losses on recalled products when the recall is through no fault of the producer. The FY97 budget was depleted in February and this bill would allow FY98 funds to pay claims arising after February of 1997.

**FEDERAL WETLANDS POLICY -**

The Clean Air, Wetlands, and Private Property Subcommittee (Chairman Inhofe, R-OK) of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee held a hearing on June 26th concerning recent administrative changes to section 404 of the Water Pollution Control Act. Administration witnesses included Robert Wayland of the Environmental Protection Agency and Michael Davis of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Chairman Inhofe opened the hearing by stating his concerns with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers process to phase out the nationwide permitting program in two years. He said that the Corps had not followed the Administrative Procedures Act and that they failed to seek any sort of public comment by publishing the regulations without advance notice. Michael Davis of the Army Corps of Engineers said that changes in the permitting process have been developed from over 4000 public comments and from ongoing dialogue with government, private, commercial and non-profit entities. Robert Wayland of the Environmental Protection Agency raised concerns for the federal governments ability to implement the Clean Water Act. He said that a recent ruling negating the Tulloch rule would jeopardize the ability of agencies to ensure effective and consistent protection of the nation's human health and environment. He said that review of discharges of dredged material under the Clean Water Act is not meant to discourage development, but is designed instead to ensure that discharges do not result in adverse environmental impacts.

**LEGISLATION OF NOTE-**

The following bills of significance to NRCS and conservation were recently introduced:

<b>Bill</b>	<b>Member</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
S. 855	Faircloth (NC)	"Responsive Government Act" would require that federal agency phones be answered by a person until 5:00pm. Would also prohibit the presence of computer games on any federal computer.

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**THIS WEEK:**

**CONGRESSIONAL RECESS FOR THE 4TH OF JULY-**

The House and Senate are in recess until early in the week of July 7.  
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**LOOKING AHEAD:**

**SENATE BRIEFING ON BUFFER INITIATIVE -**

The Chief, along with others in the partnership, will discuss the agency's conservation buffer initiative with Members of Congress and their staffs.

Tentative  
July 9            2:00 p.m.        328-A Russell Bldg.

**AMERICAN HERITAGE RIVERS -**

The House Committee on Resources (Chairman Don Young, R-Alaska) will hold an oversight hearing on the American Heritage Rivers Initiative. The hearing will focus on the Council on Environmental Quality's request for comments published in the Federal Register on May 19, 1997.

July 15           10:00 a.m.       1324 Longworth Bldg.

**AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION PROGRAMS -**

The Forestry, Resource Conservation, and Research Subcommittee (Chairman Combest, R-Texas) of the House Agriculture Committee will hold a hearing on agricultural extension and education programs.

July 9            9:30 a.m.        1300 Longworth Bldg.

**AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH: REAUTHORIZATION -** The Forestry, Resource Conservation, and Research Subcommittee (Chairman Combest, R-Texas) of the House Agriculture Committee will hold a hearing to review proposals on reauthorizing agricultural research.

July 16           9:30 a.m.        1300 Longworth Bldg.

**SENATE SUBCOMMITTEE MARKUP OF FY98 APPROPRIATIONS -**

The Agriculture, Rural Development and Related Agencies Subcommittee (Chairman Cochran, R-Miss.) of the Senate Appropriations Committee will mark up FY98 appropriations for programs under its jurisdiction.

July 17           TBA                138 Dirksen Building

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