

LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY FOR:**March 16, 1998**

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LAST WEEK:

WHIP BRIEFING - Deputy Chief for Programs, Larry Clark and Leslie Deavers, of the NRCS Watersheds and Wetlands Division, conducted a briefing on the Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program (WHIP) for the House Agriculture Committee. A general overview and NRCS progress on implementing the program was provided to Congressional staff. Most comments and questions focused on the WHIP funding allocation process.

CALIFORNIA FILLS FIRST OF THREE OPEN SEATS - LOIS CAPPS ELECTED TO HOUSE - Louis Capps, widow of Rep. Walter Capps (D-CA), became the newest Member of Congress by winning the March 10th special election to fill the seat vacated by the death of her husband. Ms. Capps will represent the 22nd district in central coastal California. A special election will be held April 7th to fill the 44th district seat formerly held by the late Sonny Bono and the 9th district formerly held by Ronald Dellums who resigned. If no candidate receives a majority, a runoff election will be held June 2nd.

NRCS/EPA BRIEF HOUSE AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE ON CONFINED LIVESTOCK ISSUE - On Friday, EPA and NRCS officials briefed House Agriculture Committee staff on the issue of Confined Animal Feeding Operations (CAFO). The briefing was mainly focused upon the EPA draft strategy for aggressively enforcing Clean Water Act provisions dealing with CAFOs. In the briefing, Mike Cook of EPA described how EPA would be working closely with USDA over the course of the next several months to develop a strategy for minimizing the adverse environmental impacts of large livestock operations. Fee Busby, of NRCS described how USDA expertise would be needed to assist landowners in meeting new requirements. He described that NRCS has played a role of technical review in CAFO policy to ensure the policies are footed in sound science. In general, presenters described EPA's role as setting the standards for allowable levels of nutrients in water, while USDA has expertise on proper management of nutrients on the land. Congressional staff expressed concern with respect to the impact of regulations on producers.

LEGISLATION OF NOTE-

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

Bill	Member	Purpose
H.R. 3451	Boswell (IA)	To amend the conservation reserve program to treat a nonprofit as a separate person for purposes of applying the limitation on payments under conservation reserve contracts.

THIS WEEK:

HOUSE FY99 AGRICULTURE APPROPRIATIONS - The Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration and Related Agencies Subcommittee (Chairman Joe Skeen, R-NM) of the House Appropriations Committee will hold hearings on appropriations for FY99.

March 17 1:00 p.m. 2362-A Rayburn Bldg.
Under Secretary for NRE, James R. Lyons and
NRCS Chief, Pearlie S. Reed

HOUSE FY99 INTERIOR APPROPRIATIONS HEARINGS - The Interior Subcommittee (Chairman Regula, R-Ohio) of the House Appropriations Committee will hold hearings on FY99 appropriations for programs under its jurisdiction. Hearings of potential interest to NRCS include:

March 19 10:00 a.m. B-308 Rayburn Bldg.
Dan Glickman, Secretary of Agriculture

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LOOKING AHEAD:

HOUSE INTERIOR FY99 APPROPRIATIONS HEARINGS - The Interior Subcommittee (Chairman Regula, R-Ohio) of the House Appropriations Committee will hold hearings on FY99 appropriations for programs under its jurisdiction. Hearings of potential interest to NRCS include:

April 1 Members of Congress

MANAGEMENT OF ANIMAL WASTE - The Senate Agriculture Committee (Chairman Richard Lugar, R-Indiana) will hold a hearing on legislation that would change national standards governing the management of animal waste.

April 2 9:00 a.m. 328-A Russell Bldg.
Witnesses TBA

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A NOTE ON TRAINING FROM THE DIRECTOR - Several people have approached me asking how they can obtain legislative affairs training. In addition to the Capitol Hill Workshop listed below, our office offers two sessions that merit your consideration. These sessions have been received favorably thus far, and we look forward to visiting each Region and State. Call my staff if your Region or State wishes to arrange one of these sessions.

FOR REGIONAL LEADERSHIP TEAMS - This session will better inform key regional staff and State Conservationists on the status and potential effect of current legislative proposals and activities on natural resource conservation and NRCS. Each session takes about an hour and a half to complete. Four Regions completed this session last fall.. *Contact Legislative Affairs for details.*

FOR STATE TEAMS - Legislative affairs can provide your state with one to four hour sessions designed to increase employee understanding of the legislative process, review issues currently before the Congress, and identify the importance of developing grass roots support for natural resource issues. *Contact Legislative Affairs for details.*

CAPITOL HILL WORKSHOP - This 2 1/2 day training session is offered by the National Employee Development Center two more times in FY98: March 31 - April 2; and June 9 - June 11. It is open to employees GS-13 and above. Participants will examine the role of Congress in the development of national policy. *Contact Tony Lovell at NEDC, (817) 334-5401 Ext. 3214, for details.*

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