Implementing the Conservation Title of the Food Security Act of 1985

Ted L. Napier, Editor

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION SOCIETY

Published for
North Central Region Research Committee 149,
Changing Institutional Environment for the On-farm Adoption
of Soil and Water Conservation Practices,
and North Central Region Research Committee 111,
Natural Resource Use and Environmental Policy,
by the
Soil and Water Conservation Society
7515 Northeast Ankeny Road
Ankeny, Iowa 50021-9764

REFERENCES

1. Napier, Ted L. 1988. *Anticipated changes in rural communities due to financial stress in agriculture: Implications for conservation programs.* In John E. Mitchell [editor] *Impacts of the Conservation Reserve Program in the Great Plains.* U.S. Forest Service and Range Management Society of America, Fort Collins, Colorado. pp. 84-90.
2. Napier, Ted L. 1990. *The evolution of U.S. soil conservation policy: From voluntary adoption to coercion.* In John Boardman, Ian Foster, and John Dearing [editors] *Soil Erosion on Agricultural Land.* John Wiley Publishers, London, England.

2

New Authorities and New Roles: SCS and the 1985 Farm Bill

Douglas Helms

Since passage of the Soil Conservation Act in 1935, the U.S. government has tried in various ways to promote soil conservation. Federal policymakers have promoted research; created an agency of technically trained people to carry soil conservation information to the farming community; encouraged the growth of conservation districts; shared in the cost of establishing soil conservation practices on farms and ranches; and tried innovative approaches, including long-term contracts, such as those in the Great Plains Conservation Program.

Title XII, Conservation, of the Food Security Act of 1985 (Public Law 99198), added a new array of soil conservation provisions designed to link soil conservation to eligibility for other U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) programs. The framers of the various clauses especially wanted to eliminate the possibility that commodity price support programs encouraged poor soil conservation practices or the loss of wetlands.

The Environmental Movement Extended

Inclusion of provisions in the 1985 farm bill to reduce soil erosion can be seen as an extension of the environmental movement. Traditional soil conservation groups, the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) and the Soil and Water Conservation Society (SWCS); USDA officials who were favorable to the concept; members of Congress and their staffs; and academics all contributed. But major changes in legislation require active lobbying from some groups. The environmental groups' new

emphasis on soil erosion was not a turning of attention away from earlier issues, such as preserving woodland, wild rivers, wetlands, and reducing pollutants in air and water. Rather, it represented a wider view encompassing agricultural land. Many individuals and organizations in the environmental movement who lobbied for the act are now monitoring the progress. They and the older soil conservation groups—NACD and SWCS—came to be known as the "conservation coalition."

While soil erosion would undoubtedly have attracted the attention of environmental groups eventually, events in the U.S. farm community accelerated the process. In the early 1970s, only a couple of years after passage of the National Environmental Policy Act, events brought soil erosion to the attention of the public. After several decades of U.S. agricultural surpluses, grain prices began rising in the early 1970s as the Soviet Union purchased large quantities. Grain exports in 1973 were double those in 1972. Prices of wheat, soybeans, and corn in 1974 were 208 percent, 133 percent, and 128 percent, respectively, of what they were in 1970 (*2*). In response, USDA eased production controls, including the requirement that "set-aside" be held out of production as a condition of participation in price-support programs. Secretary of Agriculture Earl L. Butz proclaimed, "For the first time in many years the American farmer is free to produce as much as he can" (*5*).

USDA encouraged production in the belief that increased foreign demand was a long-term trend that might well make price supports and production controls unnecessary. Early on, the rush to produce also threatened some long-established conservation measures. By late 1973, according to Butz, USDA was receiving reports of the "heedlessness of some producers." He wrote in the *Journal of Soil and Water Conservation* that reports from the northern Great Plains told of "plowing up grassed waterways, shallow hilltops, and steep slopes...and tearing out windbreaks that took many years to establish." From the southern Great Plains, there were "reports of speculators breaking ground and preparing to plant cotton on thousands of acres of native rangeland that have never been used for crops before" (*5*). Farmers converting to irrigation did remove wide windbreaks, but, later, an SCS survey found that new plantings of narrower windbreaks had more than offset windbreak losses in most Great Plains states during the period 1970 to 1975 (*28*). Whatever the actual magnitude of the loss, aerial views of the shifts from some older, wide windbreaks to irrigation systems vividly illustrated what took place.

An SCS survey of cropland expansion in July 1974 found that farmers had converted 3.6 million acres of grassland, 400,000 acres of woodland, and 4.9 million acres of idle land to cropland. About 4 million of the 8.9 million converted acres had inadequate erosion control. At the time, public attention centered on the Great Plains, but land conversions took place in all regions. The eroding land was scattered throughout the United States, with the heaviest concentrations in the Corn Belt, western Great Plains, southern Coastal Plain, eastern Piedmont and Coastal Plain, and the southern High Plains (*15*). During the early 1980s, the prospects that domestic and export demands might absorb all U.S. production would prove illusory as good crop years worldwide and loss of markets, in part because of crop embargoes, took a toll. But the trend that began in 1973 continued. Food and feed grains were planted on 294 million acres in 1972, 318 million acres in 1973, 326 million acres in 1974, and 363 million acres in 1981 (*41*). Thereafter, cropland devoted to food and feed grains went into a slight decline.

Total land in crops had declined in the 1950s and 1960s. The land brought into production during the 1970s and early 1980s actually restored the U.S. cropland base to its level immediately following World War II. It was not the same cropland in all cases because some cropland was converted to other uses. The expansion involved some land not used for production over the past 40 or so years (*16*).

The expansion of acreage in grain crops also turned people's attention to soil erosion. Questions arose about the wisdom of expanding grain production for export, hoping to reduce the balance of payments, but at the same time causing more soil erosion as a consequence. Was this a case of mortgaging the future? While some of the attention focused on trade and agricultural production policies, the effectiveness of soil conservation programs also came under scrutiny—both the technical assistance activities of SCS and the financial assistance programs administered by the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service (ASCS). In the late 1970s the General Accounting Office (GAO) issued several reports on conservation activities, including *To Protect Tomorrow's Food Supply, Soil Conservation Needs Priority Attention,* which reviewed the Agricultural Conservation Program (ACP). ACP provided costsharing money for soil conservation practices with farmers. Critics of the program believed much of the cost-share money was spent not on soil conserving practices but on practices that enhanced production of crops that were already in surplus and costing the government through price support payments. A related criticism was that the more prosperous farmers, often owners of the best land, were in a better position to take advantage of cost-sharing; thus, much of the money was spent on less erodible land rather than on the land most at risk. Finally, program reviewers believed that both the ACP funds and SCS

technical assistance should be targeted to the most critical erosion areas, rather than being distributed evenly across the country (*11, 25*). Some of the criticism was ahistorical, taking the view that little had been done in the way of conservation in the past. That view gave little recognition to shifting gains and losses over time in the soil conservation movement.

Congress' most significant act in response to the concern over soil erosion, however, was passage of the Soil and Water Resources Conservation Act of 1977 (RCA). The RCA process, as it came to be called, required the USDA to report to Congress on four interrelated topics: the status and condition of America's natural resource base, the present and likely future demands on these resources, the programs needed to protect and enhance these resources for sustained use, and any new approaches that may be needed (*12*). Government observers in the United States often scoffed at the prospect of another study as a way of evading a difficult issue. In retrospect, the RCA seems to have become one of the instrumental factors in passage of the conservation provisions of the 1985 farm bill. Previous studies of conservation needs by SCS had concentrated on identifying conservation problem areas and needed conservation work. The studies started under RCA concentrated on quantifying soil erosion. Earlier, in the Rural Development Act of 1972, Congress provided for a continuing land inventory and monitoring program that collected information for the RCA studies. The National Resources Inventories (NRI), which became linked to the RCA process, had compiled information on land cover, small water areas, flood-prone areas, irrigated land, conservation needs for various land uses, water erosion, wind erosion, prime farmland, potential for new cropland, land capability classification, and wetlands. The availability of this information, as well as the public comment process established under RCA, provided a forum for numerous individuals, organizations, other government agencies, and academics to express their opinions. The inventories supplied the raw material of analysis and debate. Conferences and special volumes flourished as soil erosion became one of the main environmental issues in the late 1970s and early 1980s (*37, 38*).

Austerity Begets Targeting

Under RCA, USDA analyzed the data and submitted a program of recommendations to Congress. It fell to the incoming USDA administration in 1981 to complete the proposed program and forward it to Congress. The formulation of the program and the discussions of legislative initiatives took place in a climate in which there would be little additional money for soil

conservation; rather, there might be less. As Congress, USDA agencies, and public interest groups debated the final RCA report and recommendations, Congress completed the 1981 farm bill (*12*). The Agriculture and Food Act of 1981 (Public Law 97-88) included several major conservation provisions.

The Farmland Protection Policy Act sought to minimize "the extent to which federal programs contribute to the unnecessary and irreversible conversion of farmland to nonagricultural uses." Throughout much of the 1960s and 1970s, the continuing loss of fertile and generally fairly level land, especially "prime farmland," to development meant that the major soil conservation topic was prime farmland and planning development in agricultural areas, rather than soil erosion. The National Agricultural Lands Study, an interagency-sponsored study of the problems and issues, was completed in early 1981 (*9, 29*). Another provision of the act, the Conservation Loan Program, made it possible for farmers to borrow from the Commodity Credit Corporation to install conservation practices. The Matching Grants for Conservation Activities would go to local units of government through state soil conservation agencies. The RCA report submitted to Congress had included matching grants. The Special Areas Conservation Program would accelerate technical and financial assistance to farmers and ranchers in areas with severe soil erosion or other resource problems. USDA would contract with farmers or ranchers to carry out conservation. SCS, in the Great Plains Conservation Program, had developed long-term contracts with farmers covering the whole farm or ranch that served as a model for the special areas program. The information gathered in the RCA process to identify soil erosion problem areas would be used to identify special areas. USDA did not include special areas in the report submitted to Congress, but Congress added a section on it (*19, 30*).

The administration did not request additional funds for the matching grants and special areas. The RCA recommendations, however, included a proposal on "targeting" as another way to direct funds and people to problem areas. USDA did not have additional funds for special areas, but did start a targeting program. The action came under existing law and did not require legislative authority. The RCA report to Congress recommended that soil conservation programs be moved away from the traditional first-come, first-served allocation and shifted to designated resource problem areas where excessive soil erosion, water shortages, flooding, or other problems threatened long-term agricultural productivity. SCS and ASCS were to devote an additional five percent of their technical and financial assistance to the targeted areas until 25 percent of their funds were going to targeted areas

(*39, 40*). From its national office, SCS designated 10 targeted areas in 1982. In 1983 the states submitted proposals for additional targeted areas.

In 1983 SCS undertook another program to shift resources to problem areas. The areas of the country that created soil conservation districts early on had laid claim to SCS people and funds because the agency worked through districts. But years later, in the 1980s, the areas with the greatest concentration of SCS personnel did not tally with the greatest erosion problem areas being identified in studies. SCS began adjusting the formulas for allocating funds and personnel to states by giving greater weight to resource problems. In cases where the one or two people stationed by SCS at the district office constituted the major part of the operation, the changes seemed ominous. Also, districts tended to see themselves as having a broader natural resource role than just soil conservation. At any rate, when Congress heard from the districts, the issues of targeting and adjusting the formula for allocating monies to states had become inseparable. Congress in 1984 froze the adjustments (*23, 24, 34*). Under the conservation provisions of the Food Security Act of 1985, the obligation to make highly erodible land and wetland determinations and to help farmers with conservation plans caused SCS to put people and resources where they were most needed.

A Changing Climate

Meanwhile, other events shaped the legislative climate in which the conservation sections of the 1985 farm bill would be considered. The Great Plains, scene of the renowned Dust Bowl of the 1930s, provided some of the impetus. Between 1977 and 1982 wheat farmers planted large tracts of grassland in Montana (1.8 million acres), South Dakota (750,000 acres), and Colorado (572,000 acres). In some places the resulting wind erosion proved a nuisance to neighboring farmers as windblown dust covered irrigated pasture and piled up against fences. Some vocal and effective local landowners wanted action, especially Edith Steiger Phillips of Keota, Colorado. She persuaded county commissioners in Weld County to take action against out-of-state interests who plowed up adjacent grassland for wheat production (*33*). She and others created sufficient sentiment for action that Colorado Senator William Armstrong introduced a bill (S. 1825) in 1981 that would deny USDA program benefits, including price support payments, to farmers who converted fragile land to cropland. The bill applied only to land west of the 100 meridian that had not been in crops during the preceding 10 years. Owners would not be eligible for price supports on that land unless they entered into a long-term agreement with the secretary

of agriculture to protect it with soil conservation practices. The bugabear of outside investors looking for tax breaks and a quick return on investment usually showed up in discussions of the Great Plains and soil conservation. Certainly, there were some large operations, but surveys conducted after the outcry indicated that Coloradans had owned most of the converted land for some time before planting it to small grains. They responded, it seems, to the prospects of more profit in grain production than from rangeland (*18, 20*).

The Armstrong bill, dubbed the "Sodbuster Bill," did not become law in its first version, but it did occasion congressional hearings and furthered discussion. The Colorado Cattlemen's Association, the American Farm Bureau Federation, and traditional soil conservation and environmental groups testified in favor of the bill. The grassroots actions to support legislation gave greater credence to Washington-based pressure for linking soil conservation and commodity programs. In addition to Weld County, other counties in Colorado and Petroleum County in Montana passed ordinances to try to prevent plowing of native grassland (*20, 26*).

The bill provided a forum for the conservation groups to promote a broader conservation section. NACD, for example, testified that denial of participation in USDA programs because of sodbusting should not be limited to price-support programs. Other suggestions further defined the marginal land in terms of land capability classification and set in process an attempt to define fragile land and, eventually, highly erodible land (*17*).

In 1981 Senator Armstrong incorporated many of these suggestions in an amendment, "Agricultural Commodity Production on Highly Erodible Land," to an agricultural appropriations act. It passed the Senate but was eliminated in the conference committee (*35*). In the next congressional session he introduced S.663, "Prohibition of Incentive Payments for Crops Produced on Highly Erodible Land." The bill still pertained to sodbusting, or land that had not been cultivated during the past 10 years. The sodbuster bill drew wide support from such organizations as the American Farm Bureau Federation and the National Farmers Union. Peter C. Myers, chief of SCS, spoke for the department in support of the bill (*36*).

During 1983 there were additional hearings on the sodbuster and other soil conservation initiatives that eventually came to be included in the farm bill. While USDA supported the sodbuster provisions, the department consistently held that soil conservation initiatives in other bills introduced in 1983 and 1984, such as a conservation reserve program or a certified voluntary set-aside, should await consideration of the 1985 farm bill (*32*).

During the interim period between the 1981 and 1985 farm bills, the PIK

(Payment-in-Kind) program provided an example of how farm programs could deflect conservation aims. USDA needed to reduce crop surpluses to boost prices and hopefully reduce the cost of price support programs. Out of several options, USDA officials in the early 1980s selected PIK, just one of several tools at their disposal that could be used in price support programs. It offered the possibility of reducing crop surpluses, which were depressing prices, by paying farmers in-kind, with farm commodities, to reduce their planted acreage. Proponents of tying conservation to the farm programs often held that commodity programs encouraged farmers to push their cropland base to the limit in order to be able to participate in annual set-aside programs. Conversely, farmers who voluntarily put erodible land into pasture, forests, or cover crops found that such land was not eligible for programs like PIK. The voluntary set-aside, a key element in some bills introduced in Congress, sought to address this problem. Reports that the "conservation-use acres" under PIK achieved less for conservation than projected also highlighted the problems of programs in which conservation was a secondary benefit (*3, 9, 22*).

Another Opportunity

The 1985 farm bill provided the next opportunity to incorporate conservation into agricultural programs. Developments in the farm economy also made for some significant changes. U.S. farmers had lost significantly in export markets. During the embargoes on grain to the Soviet Union, other countries increased production and exports. The rising value of the dollar further weakened the American farmer's position as an exporter. Farmers were caught in the price-cost squeeze, especially those who had bought land and equipment in the 1970s and who were faced with long-term, high interest loans on land and equipment whose value had declined. The percentage drop in farmland values in the five years after 1981 was the greatest for any five-year period since the Civil War (*21*). Many farmers had little borrowing equity for operating loans. In such a climate the security of price support programs became crucial. With the dramatic increase in the cost of commodity programs ($17.7 billion in fiscal year 1985), the administration began looking for ways to reduce costs in the future. Not only were individual farmers in trouble, but the whole farm credit system administered by USDA and the Farm Credit Administration was tottering. All these matters required attention from Congress (*4*).

Urban interests had for some time bargained with farm state representatives in giving their support to agricultural programs. In some cases, the

legislation benefited both sides, as in the school lunch and food stamp programs. In what turned out to be a very prophetic analysis, Don Paarlberg, an agricultural economist who served in the Eisenhower, Nixon, and Ford administrations, reasoned at the beginning of the Reagan years that the food programs were popular enough to stand on their own. The newer scenario was more likely to be urban congressmen voting for farm legislation if that legislation included performance in soil conservation provisions (*31*). The Paarlberg prophecy came to pass in the 1985 farm bill. The conservation coalition, representing the traditional environmental groups with urban support and the primary soil conservation organizations, mobilized their forces for a strong conservation section.

The conservation provisions were tied to USDA programs. Any sort of government intervention has never been popular with the farming community. But the proponents had several ready arguments. Farmers did not have to participate in programs; so conservation seemed an equitable trade for public taxpayer support of farm programs. Also, experience and years of analysis of USDA programs pointed out how conservation programs and price support programs worked at cross-purposes. The conservation programs had encouraged voluntary dedication of land to its best uses, frequently to less intensive uses, such as pasture, hay, and rangeland. Another element of public support brought about adjustments through rental or contracting arrangements. But the price support programs sent the message to farmers that they should maintain their cropland base in order to participate to the maximum in price support programs. There was less incentive to adjust production to price or to make the land use changes that matched land to its best uses. In a sense, farmers who voluntarily retired land to less intensive uses were penalized because they reduced the size of their potential payments under commodity programs.

The farmers of the conservation sections in the 1985 farm bill act had years of experience and observation and studies to rely on in writing the provisions. There had been congressional hearings on various bills after 1981. Many of the provisions that eventually appeared in the bill were laid out earlier in a report, "Soil Conservation in America: What Do We Have to Lose?", issued by the American Farmland Trust (*1*). Coalition members presented extensive testimony early in 1985 before the Senate Agriculture Committee. Some of the more active participants included Ken Cook, now of The Conservation Foundation, Bob Gray of the American Farmland Trust, Norm Berg, Washington representative for SWCS, Maureen Hinkle of the National Audubon Society, Neil Sampson of the American Forestry Association, Charlie Boothby of NACD, and Justin Ward of the Natural Resources

Defense Council. In mid-March Sierra Club lobbyists Dan Weiss and Rose McCullough and club members visited hundreds of members of Congress to press their conservation agenda. The group had also worked with USDA officials. The movement to link conservation with commodity programs benefitted from the presence of two strong conservation advocates in the department in John Block, secretary of agriculture, and Peter Myers, chief of SCS and, later, assistant secretary for natural resources and the environment. Block had earlier announced that he believed use of soil-conserving practices was a reasonable request to make of farmers receiving USDA assistance. Myers served as the liaison to Congress and reported weekly to John Block. Wayne Chapman of SCS, who was serving as a legislative fellow with the House Committee on Agriculture, provided communication between the Congress and the department. Numerous individuals in SCS and other USDA agencies provided analysis on various provisions included in the bill (*6, 10*).

Under the support and chairmanship of Congressman Ed Jones of Tennessee, the Subcommittee on Conservation, Credit, and Rural Development of the House Committee on Agriculture had long been the incubator for new soil conservation legislation, including many forerunners of the conservation provisions in the 1985 farm bill. During April 1985, Senator Richard Lugar of Indiana chaired sessions of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry on the reauthorization of the 1981 farm bill. At these meetings the conservation coalition laid out its agenda.

The Matter of Implementation

As with many laws, it was not the framing of the law but the writing of rules and guidelines for implementation that has created the most debate and disagreement. SWCS sponsored a special conference, "American Agriculture at the Crossroads," in the fall of 1987 to discuss implementation issues (*27*). There have been some disagreements over how rigorously the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) should be restricted to the most highly erodible land; the uses of the CRP land, especially for grazing and hay; the treatment of cover crops, such as alfalfa in a crop rotation, under conservation compliance; the definitions of wetlands for swampbuster; and, finally, the implementation of conservation compliance.

Probably the most difficult jobs in implementing the conservation provisions have been those of the SCS soil conservationists in field offices who work directly with farmers. Excluding the national office, four technical centers, and the state offices, there are about 7,000 SCS employees in the

field. SCS estimated that work on the conservation provisions would require about 70 percent of that staff's time until 1995. To date, much of the time has gone to making highly erodible soil determinations; updating field office technical guides with conservation systems for that particular region, its soils and traditional cropping patterns, and writing conservation plans. A field is considered highly erodible if one-third of its soil map units, or as much as 50 acres in it, are highly erodible. About 120 million acres on 1.7 million out of the 2.3 million farms in the United States are affected. SCS concentrated first on conservation compliance and is now turning its attention to making wetland determinations. Of the estimated 70 million acres of wetlands, about 5 million acres have potential for conversion to cropland and thus are affected.

Not only has there been a high work load, but there has also been the stress associated with rendering unpopular options. Conservation compliance has resulted in a role change for soil conservationists. They can still be, as they have been in the past, friends with farmers. But at times they may need to make determinations on highly erodible land or wetlands that are unwelcomed. The ability to work with the farmer toward a mutually acceptable solution is a challenge for soil conservationists. Because of this need, states have begun to focus more of their training for field office employees on stress management, conflict resolution, and public relations skills to prepare them to deal more effectively with the publics that they serve.

The Food Security Act also has some implications for the work of SCS. Operating soil conservation programs under the conservation provisions will lead to greater integration of economic analysis into farm conservation planning and the design of conservation practices. The process has already started. Researchers in experiment stations have, from the early days of the soil conservation movement, undertaken economic analysis of soil conservation programs to assist farmers and to promote the programs. At other times, researchers have tried to analyze motivation to reveal why farmers adopt conservation practices. Will farmers adopt conservation practices only if it can be demonstrated conclusively that they are profitable? Are farmers significantly motivated to adopt conservation practices by the conservation ethic? What needs, other than economic viability, do farmers have that may provide the incentive for conservation? Future analyses of the response to conservation compliance legislation may provide some answers to these questions. Conservation compliance focuses more attention, both on the part of the farmer and SCS, on the benefits, costs, and motivations involved in soil conservation.

Also, the economic aspect should influence the range of options available

to farmers. That is to say, it should influence the design of conservation systems. One criticism of soil conservation practices has been that too often practices have not been designed for small farmers with limited resources. This, of course, is not a new concern. When speaking of working with minority groups, Kenneth E. Grant, then administrator of SCS, said in 1972, "We may have to invent ways to install practices that do not require expensive specialized equipment or costly materials" (*14*). The number of minority farmers has continued to decrease drastically, but there have been significant increases in the number of small and part-time farmers. With conservation compliance, the need exists to design systems and practices for limited-resource farmers and part-time farmers that are economically feasible. Economists should be involved, along with the engineers, agronomists, and earth scientists, in working out a whole range of options with varying degrees of effectiveness and cost efficiency.

Conservation compliance also provides an opportunity to reduce the gap between conservation measures planned and conservation measures applied. Of all the people SCS assisted with conservation plans in 1968, only 65 percent actually applied at least one conservation practice. A few years later, the figure had dropped to under 60 percent, and, indeed, 65 percent was viewed as a reasonable goal (*14*).

A little historical perspective on this matter is in order. When Hugh Hammond Bennett was successful in securing emergency relief administration funds to conduct demonstration projects in 1933, there were other competitors for conservation funds. Bennett successfully argued against an emergency terracing program and made the case that there was more to soil conservation than terracing. When the Soil Erosion Service started contacting the farmers in demonstration project areas, they worked out conservation plans for the whole farm. The concept was and is good. But the agency has still had to struggle with a couple of problems. First, in judging progress in soil conservation on the land or the employee's effectiveness, completion of plans could too readily be confused with accomplishments. Conservation compliance has changed the focus. The farmer is more likely to look at his or her operation as a whole when making decisions about the crop rotations, cover crops, and other aspects of a conservation system. Planning and application of conservation practices should correlate more closely than ever before.

The Food Security Act should also lead to greater coordination of SCS recommendations to farmers with advice to the farmers from other federal agencies and the state extension services. Again, the historical reasons are illustrative. The early proponents of SCS argued successfully that attention to soil conservation from USDA was lagging and that a separate agency was appropriate. Opponents of a service devoted solely to soil conservation held that soil conservation was only one aspect of farm management. Any assistance to farmers in soil conservation should be delivered along with other assistance in animal or crop production and the other facets of farm management. But SCS has maintained its independence. In delineating responsibilities within USDA to avoid conflicts soil conservation has been treated as a separate component of farm management. Admittedly, the boundaries were blurred. With the requirements of conservation compliance, farmers are likely to insist that USDA speak with one voice and that farmers receive information on soil conservation that is coordinated with advice on other farm matters that they received from other agencies.

The Food Security Act emphasis on linking soil conservation to other assistance available from USDA and trying to add some consistency to program objectives is only the latest of numerous devices tried. We—society—have relied on research, science, technology, and education in delivering information on soil conservation directly to farmers. As a society we have helped pay for conservation through cost-sharing. Through purchase or rental, we have tried to retire or change the uses of erodible land. Appeals to farmers have varied from stewardship to profitability as a reason for soil conservation. None of these ways to promote soil conservation proved a panacea, but all had and have merit. The results of the conservation provisions have not run their course. In our complex society we dare not hope for perfection. But we can recognize the legislation as a significant addition to the quest and our work toward an enduring agriculture.

REFERENCES

1. American Farmland Trust. 1984. *Soil conservation in America: What do we have to lose?* Washington, D.C. 131 pp.
2. Batie, Sandra A. 1983. *Crisis in America's croplands?* The Conservation Foundation, Washington, D.C. 131 pp.
3. Berg, Norman A., and Robert J. Gray. 1984. *Soil conservation: The search for solutions.* Journal of Soil and Water Conservation 39(1): 18-22.
4. Browne, William P. 1988. *Private interests, public policy, and American agriculture.* University Press of Kansas, Lawrence. 294 pp.
5. Butz, Earl L. 1973. *Produce and protect.* Journal of Soil and Water Conservation 28(6): 250-251.
6. Chapman, E. Wayne. 1987. *Rationale and legislation for the creation of the Conservation Reserve Program.* In *Symposium Proceedings, Impacts of the Conservation Reserve Program in the Great Plains.* General Technical Report RM-158. U.S. Forest Service, Fort Collins, Colorado. pp. 9-13.
7. Cook, Kenneth A. 1981. *Problems and prospect for the Agricultural Conservation*

Program. Journal of Soil and Water Conservation 36(1): 24-27.
8. Cook, Kenneth A. 1981. *RCA and the art of the possible.* Journal of Soil and Water Conservation 36(6): 330-333.
9. Cook, Kenneth A. 1981. *The National Agricultural Lands Study goes out with a bang.* Journal of Soil and Water Conservation 36(2): 91-93.
10. Cook, Ken. 1983. *Soil Conservation: PIK in a poke.* Journal of Soil and Water Conservation 38(6): 475-476.
11. Cook, Ken. 1986. *Pinch me, I must be dreamin!* Journal of Soil and Water Conservation 41(2): 93-94.
12. Davis, R. M. 1978. *RCA: Your role in conservation's future.* Journal of Soil and Water Conservation 33(6): 267-269.
13. Glasser, Lawrence. 1986. *Provisions of the Food Security Act of 1985.* Agricultural Information Bulletin No. 498. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. pp. 46-50.
14. Grant, Kenneth. 1972. *Annual message, Conference of State Conservationists, September 25, 1972.* Soil Conservation Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 25 pp.
15. Grant, Kenneth E. 1975. *Erosion in 1973-1974: The record and the challenge.* Journal of Soil and Water Conservation 30(1): 29-32.
16. Heimlich, Ralph E. 1985. *Soil erosion on new cropland: A sodbusting perspective.* Journal of Soil and Water Conservation 40(4): 322-326.
17. Heimlich, Ralph E., and Nelson L. Bills. 1984. *An improved soil erosion classification for conservation policy.* Journal of Soil and Water Conservation 39(4): 261-266.
18. Huszar, Paul C. 1985. *Dusting off the sodbuster issue.* Journal of Soil and Water Conservation 40(6): 482-484.
19. Jeffords, James M. 1982. *Soil conservation policy for the future.* Journal of Soil and Water Conservation 37(1): 10-13.
20. Laycock, W. A. 1981. *History of grassland plowing and grass planting on the Great Plains.* In *Impact of the Conservation Reserve Program in the Great Plains.* General Technical Report RM-158. Rocky Mountain Forest and Range Experiment Station, Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Fort Collins, Colorado. pp. 3-8.
21. Lindert, Peter H. 1988. *Long-run trends in American farmland values.* Agricultural History 62(summer): 45-85.
22. Mekelburg, Milton E. 1983. *New approaches to commodity programs and conservation goals.* Journal of Soil and Water Conservation 38(4): 324-325.
23. Myers, Peter C. 1984. *A new look at funding technical assistance.* Journal of Soil and Water Conservation 38(1): 38-39.
24. Myers, Peter C. 1985. *Targeting: How good is the aim?* Journal of Soil and Water Conservation 49(3): 282-283.
25. Sampson, R. Neil. 1981. *Farmland or wasteland: A time to choose.* Rodale Press, Emmaus, Pennsylvania. 422 pp.
26. Society of Range Management. 1983. *Symposium on the plowing of fragile grasslands in Colorado.* Rangelands 5(2): 61-65.
27. Soil and Water Conservation Society. 1988. *American agriculture at the crossroads: A conservation assessment of the Food Security Act.* Journal of Soil and Water Conservation 43(1): 1-112.
28. Soil Conservation Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture. 1980. *Field windbreak removals in five Great Plains States, 1970 to 1975.* Washington, D.C. 15 pp.
29. Soil Conservation Society of America. 1981. *An interview with Robert Gray.* Journal of Soil and Water Conservation 36(3): 62-68.
30. Soil Conservation Society of America. 1982. *Twenty questions, John Block.* Journal

of Soil and Water Conservation 37(1): 7-9.
31. Soth, Lauren. 1981. *Farm and conservation policy decisions Reagan will face.* Journal of Soil and Water Conservation 36(1): 22-24.
32. U.S. Congress. 1982. Congressional Record. S. 12376, September 28, 1982.
33. U.S. Congress. 1982. *Prohibition of price supports for crop produced on certain lands.* House of Representatives, Committee on Agriculture. 97th Congress, 2nd session, Washington, D.C.
34. U.S. Congress. 1983. *Senate, Committee on Agriculture, Hearing, prohibition of incentive payments for crops produced on highly erodible land.* 98th Congress, 1st session, Washington, D.C. 106 pp.
35. U.S. Congress, House of Representatives. 1984. *Agriculture, rural development, and related agencies appropriation bill, 1985.* House Report 98-809, 98th Congress, 2nd session. Washington, D.C.
36. U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on Agriculture. 1984. *Hearings, miscellaneous conservation.* 98th Congress, 1st session, Serial No. 98-13. Washington, D.C. 503 pp.
37. U.S. Department of Agriculture. 1981. *1980 appraisal. Part I. Soil, water, and related resources in the United States: Status, condition and trends.* Washington, D.C. 327 pp.
38. U.S. Department of Agriculture. 1981. *1980 appraisal. Part II. Soil, water, and related resources in the United States: Analysis of resource trends.* Washington, D.C. 296 pp.
39. U.S. Department of Agriculture. 1981. *1981 program report and environmental impact statement, revised draft, Soil and Water Resources Conservation Act, 1981.* Washington, D.C.
40. U.S. Department of Agriculture. 1982. *A national program for soil and water conservation: 1982 final program report and environmental impact statement.* Washington, D.C. 163 pp.
41. U.S. Department of Agriculture. 1987. *Agricultural statistics, 1987.* Washington, D.C.
42. U.S. Department of Agriculture. 1988. *Conservation systems workshop.* Produced for the U.S. Department of Agriculture by the Cooperative Extension Service. University of Illinois, Urbana.