

Subject: 4-27-10 eBlast from NRCS



A banner with a textured, golden-brown background. The text "This day in HISTORY" is written in a mix of cursive and bold, block letters.

April 27, 2010

HAPPY 75TH BIRTHDAY TO NRCS . . . TODAY

We hope all employees and partners will take some time today to celebrate the 75th Anniversary of NRCS. Some of the official activities today include:

Birthday cake celebration at a meeting of the Utah Partners for Conservation and Development. NRCS State Conservationist Sylvia Gillen will make a presentation, share some cake, and show a 75th Anniversary DVD.

USDA will release results of the 2007 National Resources Inventory to mark the agency's 75th anniversary. The NRI data will be posted on the NRI page at www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/nri.

To help put this day in perspective, read the following historic account issued by the Office of History and Preservation, Office of the Clerk, U.S. House of Representatives:

Soil Conservation in the New Deal Congress

April 27, 1935

On this date, as blistering heat sapped the American West of much-needed moisture, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed into law the Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act. Throughout Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Colorado, New Mexico, and the Dakotas during the early 1930s, high winds stirred the arid soil, loosened after years of rapid homesteading and commercial agriculture. Nearly 180 dust storms ripped across the southern plains during 1933, a prelude to the major storm of May 1934, which whipped an estimated 350 million tons of earth into the sky. It trapped people in their homes and suffocated cattle on the plains. Dust fell like snow in Chicago and eastern cities. Sailors on ships 300 miles off the Atlantic coast swept Kansan soil from their decks. Similar storms plagued America's center well into 1935. In response, western House Democrats introduced H.R. 7054, "to provide for the protection of land resources against soil erosion, and for other purposes." Unlike the ecological forces at work on the plains, [John Marvin Jones](#) of Texas explained, "the bill is simple and easily understood." Bill sponsor [John Joseph Dempsey](#) of New Mexico—whom colleagues described as a "soil erosion enthusiast"—argued that the measure was of national interest, and therefore vital. [John Conover Nichols](#) of Oklahoma, whose state dust storms hit particularly hard, noted that in uprooting its subsoil, the United States "[had] been living in a fool's paradise, with respect to the security of [its] most basic

asset.” With the understanding that such storms posed a national threat, the New Deal Congress approved the bill. The ambitious act established the Soil Conservation Service to combat soil erosion and to preserve natural resources, “control floods, prevent impairment of reservoirs, and maintain the navigability of rivers and harbors, protect public health, public lands and relieve unemployment.” The Soil Conservation Act rewarded farmers who planted grasses and legumes to support the soil, rather than commercial crops which exhausted its nutrients—a difficult measure for many farmers to agree to during the Great Depression. The act, however, classified commercial harvests like wheat as a threat to the plain’s soil, giving farmers a chance to wean their fields from surplus crops at the federal government’s expense. While the act appropriated no money upfront, it left open the option to fund projects with “such sums as Congress may from time to time determine necessary.” President Roosevelt’s advisor, Rexford Tugwell, lauded the measure. “Under this plan,” said Tugwell, “it will pay farmers, for the first time, to be social-minded, to do something for all instead of for himself alone.”

Periodic news reports from NRCS Utah



To see blasts from the past go to [e-Blast archives](#)

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