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Soil Conservation Service  
For Representative Bob Dole, Kansas  
Spillman Creek Watershed meeting notes  
April 7, 1967

This is a happy occasion for all of us. The Spillman Creek Watershed Project is authorized for operations and is on its way.

That one sentence sums up a great deal of hard work by a great many people-- including many here today. The project is sponsored by the Spillman Creek Watershed Joint District No. 43 and the Soil Conservation Districts of Lincoln, Mitchell, Osborne and Russell counties. They were assisted by planners and technicians of the Soil Conservation Service, the Forest Service and Kansas State University. And I'm sure other men and women, in and out of these organizations, also had a hand.

So, I repeat, the Spillman Creek Watershed Project is authorized for construction and is on its way. As we go further into this new phase, it might be wise to reiterate a few facts about the project, and to discuss briefly future developments.

The Spillman Creek Watershed includes an area of 119,360 acres, or  $186\frac{1}{2}$  square miles. It is adjacent to the smaller Lost Creek Pilot Watershed and the Upper Salt Creek and Lower Salt Creek Projects; the latter two are now in the planning stages.

As I understand it, the watershed problems here consist of upland erosion, gullying and headcutting of tributary drains and floodwater damage to crops, land, roads, homes and so on, to the extent of almost \$160,000 annually. The relative freedom from floods that should occur from this project will, of course, reduce direct flood damage and increase the value and uses of the land.

The engineering works on this project will include 21 dams and two grade stabilization structures.

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Conservation work will be done on almost 120,000 acres of land. This includes terracing, contouring, tree and shrub plantings, and so on. I'm pleased that land treatment is recognized as a major part of small watershed projects. Land and water treatment, of course, are interrelated, and proper treatment for both will reduce sediment and flood damages and improve the land itself.

The estimated cost of the project is \$2,826,600; over one-third of the monies will come from local sources.

The estimated annual benefits of the Spillman Creek Watershed Program will be around \$160,000. This will come mainly from reduced flood damages, although some of the benefits will come from more intensive, and different land use.

The average annual benefits from structural measures alone are estimated at \$147,000 versus average annual costs of \$69,500. Thus, every dollar of structural cost is expected to return about \$2.10 in benefits.

With results like this, it is no wonder the small watershed program in Kansas is receiving support from so many groups. Seventy-four applications for small watershed projects under P.L. 566 have been filed with the Soil Conservation Service in Washington by their local sponsors. Twenty-nine of these, including this one, have been approved for construction, and 17 others are in the planning stage. Kansas is one of the top five States in the number of projects authorized for planning, and 9th in the number approved for operations.

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Of course, Kansas has always been "way up there" in general land and water conservation work. Our State leads the Nation in miles of terraces and diversions and in acres of grass waterways established.

Conservation thinking is not confined to farms or ranches. The Kansas Bankers Association annually recognizes the outstanding conservation farms in each of our 105 counties. Bankers know that, from a dollars-and-cents standpoint alone, conservation is a good investment for both individual farmer and the whole community. Like land and water, town and country are related. When farmers do poorly, business and professional people living in the area suffer from a reduced economic base; and when floods or a shortage of municipal water supplies hits the town or city, farmers are also affected in the wallet.

Reverting back now to the watershed program alone--water has always been important to Kansas. Because of our geographical location, we've had the whole spectrum of water problems, from overabundance to critical shortages.

We must continue programs to protect our communities from the twin scourges of drought and flood. But in addition, I think, we must increasingly consider other water uses too. And we are.

In Kansas, eight of our small watershed projects are multiple-purpose--meaning flood prevention plus. I'd like to briefly mention those plus benefits.

These can be irrigation or drainage water, rural or municipal water supplies, fish and wildlife development, or water-based recreation. They can be almost whatever are the water needs of the particular community.

Six of our State's eight multiple purpose projects include storage for municipal water supply and recreation, while the other two include rural water supply.

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The economic benefits of such guaranteed water supplies affect a whole area. In Georgia, for example, the Little Tallapoosa River Watershed made provisions for municipal water supply in its program, and with assurance of adequate water, a new industry employing 400 local people moved in. Ninety percent of this 400-man work force is drawn from small farms in the area.

The Mountain Run Watershed project near Culpeper, Va. has attracted three new industries employing 500 local people. A community hospital had been held up from lack of sufficient water, and this was completed. The income of workers at the three industries and the hospital is \$1,750,000 annually--in a community of 24 hundred people. Farmers have suffered no serious floods since the project was completed, and the community has sufficient drinking and industrial water. In 1964 when neighboring towns had to ration their water supplies, Culpeper's industries kept humming, thanks to their 163 million gallon reservoir from the watershed project.

Or, in another area of multiple use, we can look at the Twin Caney Watershed here in Kansas in Chautauque, Elk and Montgomery counties. In addition to flood retardation, the city of Caney gains 600 acre-feet of municipal water, while the Boy Scouts in the area have developed a large Quivira Scout Ranch around a 400-acre lake formed by one of the multiple-purpose dams. The ranch serves 15,000 scouts, and the new lake provides swimming, sailing, canoeing and fishing. The Quivira Council of Boy Scouts contributed around \$111,000 towards construction costs, besides land and water costs.

Incidentally, I don't think we should look upon the inclusion of water-based recreation in these projects as a minor or incidental benefit for local people alone. Nowadays, outdoor recreation is both pleasure and a big business.

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As our country becomes more urbanized, the chances for the old, free outdoor fun diminish. The vacant lot turns into a supermarket; the nature trail is part of a new suburb, and the old swimming hole is polluted from industry. But people still want these pleasures--and they will pay for them.

In addition, our national demand for outdoor recreation is estimated to triple during the next 33 years.

So, water-based recreation as a business is something to think about.

Our needs for water for all purposes, both nationally and locally, are increasing every decade. Right now, it's estimated that we use 1,500 gallons of water a day for every man, woman and child in the country. And the figure will double in the next 33 years.

Just one small example: an automobile coming off the assembly line today represents the use of at least 30,000 gallons of water--20,000 in producing the steel, and 10,000 more gallons in the assembly process.

Similar figures can be found in many aspects of modern living, both in farming and industry. So, when we talk about water use in today's America, we're talking about great quantities of water.

Now, what has that to do with us? Simply this. Our needs for water in Kansas, too, are going to increase in the years ahead--for farming, for homes, for industry, for our growing population and our growing demand for outdoor recreation. Our amount of water is not going to increase. All we can do is make better, and more multiple use, of the water we do have. I think all of us concerned with watershed work should keep the multiple use concept in mind.

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I know that small watershed projects, for one or several purposes, are hard work; they take time and you can run into all kinds of discouraging roadblocks. But the alternative to not doing everything we can to improve our land and water management, while there is still time, is pretty grim.

The news commentator Eric Sevareid once wrote: "It is beginning to appear that history may be offering this generation of Americans a precious gift, and that if we do not recognize and use this gift we will lay a curse on the generation to come. The gift is time."

I'm reminded of this back in Washington every time I ride past the Potomac River. An early missionary in the area wrote: "This is the clearest water I have ever seen." Today, the Potomac is sometimes called an open sewer. It's been closed to swimmers for years, near Washington, because of heavy pollution. Going past it, you can see, and often smell, such obvious signs of pollution as slime, floating debris and so on. In addition, an estimated silt load of two-and-a-half million cubic yards goes into the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers at Washington annually, and only by continuous dredging--at a dollar a cubic yard--are the navigation channels able to stay open.

It will cost millions of dollars to clean up the Potomac--if it can be cleaned up. And this is only one small example of our national water management problem.

Of course, we're not anywhere near that far along the pollution route in Kansas. But we're not home free either. What we do have, with out water problems, is more time and more developing experience than some other areas in the Nation.

What we also have are two other plus factors that make me optimistic. One, we have the technical ability to know what to do. And--just as important--we have the people like you people here who will do the job--get it started and follow it through.

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In my worklife, I've found that there are two kinds of people: those who are part of the problem and those who are part of the solution. You people are part of the solution to our water and land use problems. You're living in a good State and making it a great one. You're the kind of people that make me proud to represent Kansas.

I congratulate you on your progress and your hard work. We're seeing some of the results today, and we'll be seeing more in the future. I assure you I'll do everything I can in Washington to make our State an even better place to live. Thank you for inviting me to this happy occasion today.

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