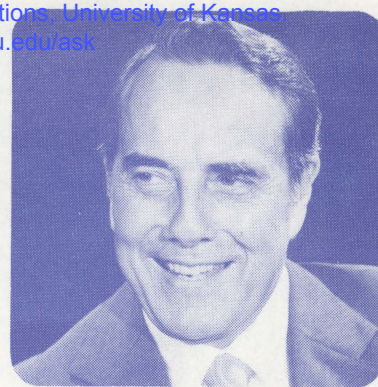


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DOLE INITIATIVE TO PROTECT RURAL AMERICAN RESOURCES: NEW ENVIRONMENT AND CONSERVATION PROGRAM

WASHINGTON -- A new plan to help protect rural America's vital natural resources will soon be introduced on Capitol Hill, according to its author, Senate Republican Leader Bob Dole of Kansas.

The Dole plan calls for the creation of a 5-20 million acre "Environmental Conservation Acreage Program" to do more in the battle against contamination of land, water, and wildlife areas.

"117 million Americans are dependent upon groundwater as their principle water supply," Dole said. "And we must do all we can to protect it -- and the land -- for this generation and the next."

Under the new program, acreage reduction efforts would be conducted on a longer-term, more cost-effective basis and limits would be placed on the total amount of all acreage idled under government programs, according to Dole. Costs of the new reserve should be minimal since most of the acreage would come from established cropland bases, particularly feed grain acreage.

"Water quality and pesticide residues are becoming more of a concern in rural America. This new and separate reserve is designed to meet these challenges and other important environmental goals, plus it also gives our farmers greater flexibility in land use planning," said Dole.

"ECARP" PROVISIONS

- * Establishes a new reserve, similar to the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), to idle 5-20 million acres identified as potentially threatening to the environment. Environmental problems to be targeted include: groundwater and surfacewater, endangered species, excessive pesticide residue, soil salinity and other environmental and soil erosion problems.
- * Permits the Secretary of Agriculture to count acreage idled under the CRP and ECARP as meeting producers obligations under annual set-aside and whole-base bid programs. A limit would be placed on the total amount of U.S. farmland idled under all Federal commodity and conservation programs.
- * Authorizes the Secretary to make special bonus payments for producers willing to retire permanently any crop bases, quotas and allotments.
- * Allows a broader range of management practices on enrolled land and fosters wildlife management and outdoor recreational uses of enrolled land.
- * Provides permanent spending authority for the CRP and the ECARP under the CCC Charter Act.

Senator Charles Grassley (R-Iowa) also announced his intention to cosponsor the bill.