

News from Senator

BOB DOLE



(R - Kansas)

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DOLE INTRODUCES NEW ENVIRONMENT AND CONSERVATION INITIATIVE

WASHINGTON -- Citing the need to protect rural America's natural resources, Senate Republican Leader Bob Dole (R-Kan) today introduced legislation which would establish a new and separate long-term environmental reserve of up to 20 million acres.

"I am pleased that the National Corn Growers Association, the National Pork Producers Council, the National Association of Wheat Growers, and the Fertilizer Institute have embraced the concept and direction of the bill. This bill is a good starting point and I look forward to working with others in the agricultural community as the bill progresses," said Dole.

"The contamination of our nation's water supply is a growing concern. 117 million people in rural America depend on ground water for drinking purposes. Preventing contamination before it happens is the best answer and this new and separate reserve should give farmers more flexibility in dealing with these type of environmental problems."

The Dole initiative, known as the "Environmental Conservation Acreage Reserve Program (ECARP)," would shift acreage reduction efforts to a longer-term, more cost-effective basis while placing limits on the total amount of acreage idled under government programs. Costs of the new reserve should be minimal since most of the acreage would come from established cropland bases, particularly feed grain acreage.

"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: ground water, overall water quality, restrictions based on pesticide residue, soil damage, soil salinity, soiltiltation and other related 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.