

CONSERVATION OF OUR SOIL AND WATER RESOURCES

(Kansas Association of Soil Conservation Districts)

(Annual Meeting, Hays, Kansas, December 4, 1962)

(Remarks by Congressman Bob Dole)

Member of Agriculture Committee and Conservation & Credit Sub-Committee

It is a distinct pleasure to be in Hays and have this opportunity to visit about matters of mutual interest.

You have just about completed another successful year in soil and water conservation and I want to commend the leaders of the soil conservation districts of Kansas for the outstanding achievements. Your responsibilities over the years have grown immensely, yet you have met them successfully on every front.

Today we stand on the threshold of not just a new year in soil conservation - - but of a new era. The work you do from now on will become increasingly important, not just to yourselves and your community but also to Kansas and to the entire Nation. The many people engaged in some phase of soil and water conservation have accomplished much. Indeed, our soil conservation movement is the envy of the world, and the willingness of those responsible for carrying out the many activities in our conservation program to face mounting responsibilities each year is to be admired. But the accomplishments of the past are now history. What awaits us is the future. The challenge it presents is one of great magnitude.

There was a time when land utilization was not considered a problem in the United States. In fact most people thought it never would be a problem. In the early days when the soil on one farm was depleted, it was the customary thing to pack up and move on to new land. But now there is no new land. We must husband our land resources to assure continued production during our lifetime and for the future. We must develop and conserve our water resources also in order to meet our present and future needs. The two go together. As reported by the Senate Committee on

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National Water Resources: "Land and water resources are inseparable, and therefore watershed improvement programs are a basic and extremely important part of the Nation's overall water resource development program." You can see the increasingly important role your soil conservation district will play in the future and the important role they will have in maintaining this Nation's position in food production.

The need for conservation of our soil resources is widely recognized.
Conservation has many friends.

Most everyone who knows about it -- favors it -- at least in principle.
School children learn about it in the classroom. Television and radio programs are presenting interesting and realistic data to bring the matter to the attention of more and more people.

Bird lovers advocate it. So do wilderness enthusiasts.
Sportsmen's groups support it. Garden clubs are overwhelmingly in favor of it.

Farm organizations write resolutions about it. Our great political parties give prominence to it in their platforms.

A vast array of organizations and groups stand ready to defend it. Few informed people are so bold as to oppose in public the conservation of our agricultural resources.

In view of this wide recognition of the conservation movement one may well ask why it is necessary to place so much emphasis on conservation.

The casual observer might think the conservation battle has been won. Or at least, the principle has been so well established that a favorable outcome is inevitable. How true is this? Recently, the United States Department of Agriculture published an initial report of its Conservation Needs Inventory Committee--a nationwide inventory of the soil and water conservation needs of our agricultural lands. This study shows that--while there has been great progress in conserving farmland--the conservation battle

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Sixty-two percent of our present cropland still needs conservation treatment.

Almost three-quarters of our privately-owned pasture and range land needs conservation treatment.

More than half of our private forest and woodland needs conservation treatment.

Another Department of Agriculture study tells us that more than fifty million acres of present cropland should be shifted into other uses by 1980, and these areas will need the establishment of new conservation practices.

On cropland, we have 161 million acres that need treatment because of erosion as a dominant problem. Perhaps another 40 million acres also have erosion as a secondary problem. Other dominant problems include excess water on 60 million acres, unfavorable soil on 36 million acres, and 14 million acres that need treatment because of the effects of adverse climate.

About 364 million acres of private pasture and range land need conservation treatment. We need to establish cover on 72 million acres of this pasture and range, and improve the cover on 107 million acres.

Our "Conservation Needs Inventory" tells us further that of 12,700 small watersheds, 8,300 need action to solve problems beyond the ordinary means of individual land owners.

It is clear that a tremendous conservation job still confronts us. How can this be when the advantages of agricultural conservation are so well known? To answer that, we must appreciate the fact that just because conservation is good and desirable--that doesn't necessarily make it happen. Conservation calls for incentive and it calls for adequate measures for financing--among the private owners who control more than two-thirds of our Nation's land area.

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No matter how desirable conservation may be--socially and economically--the man on the land has a prior responsibility: To clothe and feed his family and provide its members with other essentials of modern living, including education.

Most all conservation will in the long run increase farm income--we know that. But a man's family must be fed and clothed--and his taxes paid--for the short run as well. Generally it is only after these immediate needs are taken care of that the farmer can move on to the long-range economic and social considerations that are included in conservation.

Some kinds of conservation in land use and treatment are immediately profitable. It is relatively easy for farmers to put these into effect without delay. I do not wish to minimize that fact. Nor do I wish to minimize the tremendous progress that has been made in conservation--both in long-range planning and in work on a somewhat shorter term basis.

Good conservation contributes to better living on the farm--but at the same time a decent level of living is a prerequisite to proper land use. Conservation has to make economic sense to the man who farms the land or it just doesn't happen.

America's private land owners hold in their hands the major part of our natural resources. Not only does privately-owned agricultural land produce most of the Nation's food and fiber--it also provides most of our timber, water, wildlife, and much of our outdoor recreation.

Privately-owned rural land makes up more than two-thirds of the United States mainland.

Obviously then, conservation begins with the farmers, ranchers, and rural residents who control this vast land area.

Our generation has the responsibility to help provide these land owners with the incentive and means to attack the present and growing land and water problems that effect us all.

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For more than a quarter century there has been a growing concern among ranchers, farmers, agricultural leaders and leaders in the conservation movement concerning the matter of who in the final analysis is responsible for the conservation of our land and water resources, whether it be the responsibility of the land owners alone or a joint responsibility of farmers, ranchers and urban people. There is every reason to believe today that a reasonably high percentage of the people of this country recognize that all the urban and rural people, not just the farmers and ranchers and other land owners alone, have a stake in, and a part of the responsibility for protecting and conserving our farm and ranch lands.

For more than 25 years, the Congress has made clear its recognition of such joint responsibility in the conservation movement.

Early in 1935, the Congress enacted legislation authorizing the establishment of the Soil Conservation Service in the United States Department of Agriculture. The Soil Conservation Service is responsible for developing and carrying out a national program of conservation for land and water resources. The program includes activities authorized by several acts of Congress.

The central objective of the Soil Conservation Service is an integrated system of land use and conservation treatment in harmony with the capability and needs of the land.

This is accomplished through unified planning that combines all the technologies, considers all the resources, and recognizes all the human interests that apply to each area of land.

This year locally organized and managed soil and water conservation districts are observing their 25th anniversary as the Department of Agriculture observes its 100th anniversary.

The first state soil conservation district law was passed in 1937, in Arkansas, and the first soil conservation district was created that same year, in North Carolina.

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Today the Soil Conservation Service is assisting 2,929 soil conservation districts in the 50 States and Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. They include 96 percent of the farms in the United States, and 93 percent of all land in farms, twenty-four States are completely covered by districts. Kansas with 105 soil conservation districts has been completely covered by districts since 1954.

During the past two years fifty new districts were formed. These districts included areas not before included in any soil conservation district. In addition to these 58 other districts (27 in F.Y. 1961 and 31 in F.Y. 1962) were formed by consolidation of existing districts or by the division of multiple--county districts into single county districts. It is encouraging to observe that the program is continuing to reach out into areas not previously covered by the program.

In the past quarter century districts have become a permanent part of American agriculture. Districts are an outstanding example of what makes America tick, what sets it apart from other nations. Districts are purely American in their concepts, their belief in local initiative and control, and their willingness to assume responsibilities and to carry on works that benefit their fellow men, their community, their State, and their country.

Congressional recognition of conservation as a national problem which should be shared by all the people has been made manifest by at least three other established programs: (1) The Agricultural Conservation Program, (2) The Watershed and Flood Prevention Programs and (3) The Great Plains Conservation Program. I would like to say a few words about the importance of each of these major programs.

Since 1936, the Congress each year has appropriated funds in addition to those required for operations under the Soil Conservation Service technical assistance programs. These additional funds are used to assist farmers and ranchers in carrying out conservation practices on land under the program now known as the Agricultural Conservation Program. Under this program the Federal

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Government shares with individual farmers and ranchers the cost of carrying out soil and water conservation measures intended to (1) protect farm and ranch land from wind and water erosion, (2) improve the productivity of the Nation's agricultural resources, and (3) protect and improve the source, flow and use of water for agricultural purposes.

During each year farmers invest their own money, time, machinery, and labor as their part of sharing with the Federal Government the cost of approved conservation measures. Every farmer is eligible to participate on a voluntary basis. During calendar year 1961 over a million participating farmers received \$238 million in total assistance. Since the farmers' share is about half the total cost of the conservation practices, the total conservation investment under the program was about \$476 million.

Farmers and ranchers in Kansas received cost-share assistance totaling \$6,282,979 for practices approved and completed in 1961.

In general, the ACP offers cost-sharing on practices that help farmers establish the kind of conservation they need, and as they can best fit the measures into their farming operations.

These conservation measures applied to farm lands have been important in preventing floods, conserving water supplies, and reducing sedimentation of streams and siltation of reservoirs. Cities as well as farms benefit from this sort of conservation on the watersheds of the Nation.

To strengthen this program of watershed protection and to encourage expansion of the program, the Congress passed the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act of 1954, generally known as Public Law 566.

Under this new act, each project is a local undertaking with Federal help, not a Federal project with local help.

The act places full responsibility for starting small watershed projects on local people who will act through their own organizations. Only local organizations can initiate a project. Federal help cannot be given if the project is disapproved by the State concerned.

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Under public Law 566, as amended, the Secretary of agriculture is authorized to give technical, cost-sharing, and credit aid to local organizations in planning and carrying out works of improvement for (1) flood prevention; (2) agricultural water management, including irrigation and drainage; and (3) nonagricultural water management, including municipal or industrial water supply and fish and wildlife development. The Soil Conservation Service has the primary responsibility for carrying out this act.

The Congress is passing the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act made clear--

That the additional authority of this act should be used to supplement both our present soil and water conservation programs and programs for development and flood protection in our major river valleys;

That the act will bridge the gap between these two types of programs and greatly enhance the ultimate benefits of both; and

That Federal help should be made available only to assist local organizations plan and install needed flood-prevention and water-management measures that cannot feasibly be installed under other current Federal conservation programs.

The "small watershed" program has many implications for cost-sharing under the Agricultural Conservation Program, as I know you are aware.

Public Law 566, under which most of these projects are authorized, provides that--in order for retention reservoir to be installed with Federal assistance there must be conservation agreements on at least 50 percent of the land above the structure. Wherever a drainage area presents a special sediment hazard, at least 75 percent of the land treatment measures must be applied or be in the process of application in the critical area.

This assumes a great deal of effort by individual land owners and in the past much of this work has been accomplished with the help of ACP. An incomplete record shows that in 1946 organized watersheds of various categories, cost-sharing under the 1961 ACP alone has aided almost 100,000 farmers to the extent of almost \$18 million.

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A total of 446 watershed projects under the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Program (P.L. 566) had been approved as of November 20, 1962.

The estimated cost breakdown for these projects is as follows:

Estimated total cost - - - - -	\$669,990,135
Estimated total Federal cost - - - -	400,908,845
Estimated total local cost - - - - -	269,081,290

Of the 446 projects, 78 were approved in the year 1962 between the dates of January 1 and November 20.

In the State of Kansas 4 projects were approved during 1962 from January 1 to November 20. The estimated cost breakdown for the Kansas projects are:

Estimated total cost - - - - -	\$7,668,738
Estimated total Federal cost - - - -	6,099,324
Estimated total local cost - - - - -	1,569,414

As of November 1, 1962, 54 applications had been received from Kansas, covering 5,180,400 acres, of which 30 projects had been authorized for planning assistance from the Soil Conservation Service. Of these, 14 projects, covering 853,000 acres had been authorized for operations. Construction had been completed on two of the projects.

Of the five pilot watershed projects in Kansas, four (Aiken Creek, Little Delaware-Mission Creek, Lost Creek, and Snipe Creek) have been completed. The fifth, Switzler Creek, is scheduled for completion this year.

However, too much of our watershed money is not going to rural areas. On the east coast, we have one watershed project in which the recipient seems to be the V. & O. Railroad. Public Law 566 was passed primarily for the rural areas, but there is a gradual erosion to give more watershed money to urban area projects. We should stride to see that the rural areas predominate in getting watershed money.

Although recreation is an important aspect of current watershed projects we must be certain that recreation remains a secondary aspect of the project and not the primary one.

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So it is clear that the job ahead--in conserving and improving our natural resources--is not small. Nor can it be adequately accomplished without the cooperation of land owners, industry, and Federal, State and local Governments.

Still another outstanding conservation program of importance to Kansas and the entire Great Plains area is the Great Plains Conservation Program authorized by the Congress in 1956, Public Law 1021.

The Great Plains Conservation Program is tailored to fit the particular needs of a region long troubled by land use problems related to soil and moisture and climatic conditions peculiar to the area. The program is moving forward in accomplishing its basic purpose, with increasing support and wide interest. Plans in process of application now total over 9,100 on nearly 23 million acres. They provide for 28 percent of the cropland to return to permanent grass.

As of July 1, 1962, over \$20 million had been paid in cost-shares to land owners for the 24 eligible practices under the program in the Great Plains area.

In Kansas, conservation plans and contracts under this program total over 800 covering about 800,000 acres in the 47 designated counties.

As of July 1, 1962, \$1,465,544 had been paid in cost-shares for 19 of the 24 eligible practices in the program since its inception.

Important concepts embodied in this program are being considered for application in expanded programs now under consideration in soil and water conservation. This is reflected in the increase in appropriations this year, the first since the program was launched in 1957. The increase will make possible a stepped-up effort to assist the more than 270,000 farmers and ranchers eligible in the 10-State area.

Under new legislation the Department of Agriculture was given additional authority to work with local people and their organizations, including soil conservation districts, in long-range programs for conserving

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cropland into other profitable uses - - for timber, grassland, and income-producing recreation, including water-based recreation in small watershed projects.

In small watershed projects the Department will now be able to cost-share on recreational developments, defer repayment by local organizations for municipal and industrial water capacity to meet anticipated needs, and to help pay for land, rights-of-way and easements for reservoir or other sites or areas dedicated to recreation in small watershed projects.

Beyond a doubt, we are living through the most revolutionary period in American agriculture. As leaders in our soil conservation districts you have accepted new ideas and changed farming methods to meet them. Through your leadership soil conservation has also changed to keep abreast with this changing agriculture. The concept has been broadened, new tools have been added -- but the basic objectives have not changed. Conservation planning is still the key to getting our job done - - be it on the ranch, the farm, or in the watershed. The soil conservation district is the action group in the entire movement.

I salute the splendid job you have done in the 25 years since the first district came into being. They have been challenging years, I know, but even greater challenges lie ahead.

As a comparatively new member in Congress, I wish that in the years ahead I can make a lasting non-partisan contribution to the future growth of Conservation in Kansas and the nation.