

From the Office of
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SENATOR HUMPHREY DEPLORES 'SLOWDOWN' ON WATERSHED PROTECTION PROJECTS

Thousands of the nation's small watersheds need the benefits of conservation land treatment combined with small upstream dams and other improvements, Senator Hubert H. Humphrey (D., Minn.) declared yesterday before the seven-county regional Conservation Field Day and Plowing Matches in Benton County.

"I am proud to be an ardent supporter of our national soil and water conservation and watershed protection programs," Senator Humphrey declared. "I believe in these small watershed projects. They are important to every American.

"I see in them the key to the future prosperity and welfare of our country. Because I believe this, I shall not hesitate to criticize when I think these programs are not being handled properly," Senator Humphrey said.

While saying in general the Federal Government is handling its soil and water conservation responsibilities "effectively and efficiently", Senator Humphrey added that "I must call to your attention one important exception."

"The Bureau of the Budget, which is directly attached to the White House, has been throwing roadblocks into the small watershed program," he warned.

"Here we have the unusual spectacle of an arm of the White House itself 'sitting on' a program that the Administration has endorsed wholeheartedly. The Budget Bureau is withholding from Congress projects that have been approved by the local people, by the State, and by the Department of Agriculture for which plans have been completed and money appropriated.

"The Budget Bureau is acting arbitrarily and capriciously in this matter. It appears that the Budget Bureau is making up its own rules instead of following those prescribed by Congressional legislation, and the procedures set up by the Administration of which it is a part.

"We have reached an odd state of affairs when one Federal agency can, without cause, block the will of the people, of Congress, of the Department of Agriculture, and of the Administration itself."

Senator Humphrey revealed that at his request the Senate Committee on Government Operations is "checking into the Budget Bureau's delaying tactics on small watershed projects, and I predict we can expect some action soon."

In discussing how such projects affect everyone, Senator Humphrey added:

"Our country is made up of watersheds. Our great river basins are subdivided by numerous tributaries and myriad small streams. Each, large or small, is a watershed. Everyone of us, whether we practice our kinship to the soil on the farm, or less directly in town or city, lives in a watershed.

"The problems of our major river basins are a compound of the problems of their lesser drainage areas -- the small watersheds -- and these problems can be solved best by going back to this source.

"Small watersheds are the logical place to begin programs for soil and water conservation, flood prevention, siltation reduction, water supplies for agricultural, domestic and industrial use, and increased recreational opportunities.

"The watershed protection and flood prevention program offers that opportunity. And it offers it in the right way -- at the initiative of, and under the control of, the local people."

For Senator Humphrey

It's a real privilege to be here. I am thoroughly enjoying this conservation field day and the plowing matches.

After arduous months in Washington, the open spaces of our great farm state are more attractive than ever.

All of us have a kinship to the soil. We are land animals. Our habitat is the face of the earth. We may fly above the earth, or sail upon its waters, or tunnel into its depths, but always we must return to the surface, and from the surface we obtain our basic needs. From it we draw life in the form of food and water. From it comes most of our shelter and clothing, and much of the raw materials for our industry,

Unlike many of you to whom farming is a way of life, most of us do not have the daily opportunity to enjoy our kinship to the soil. But the kinship is ever there even though we can enjoy it or express it only indirectly -- except on an occasion like this.

A day in the country is indeed worth a month of days anywhere else!

Our kinship to the soil is not rooted in sentiment alone. It is rooted in man's primary instinct -- the will to survive. For the land is our base and its products are the foundation of our economy. Our standard of living, the highest the world has ever known, depends entirely on our natural resources. This is a truth as old as civilization itself -- nations have prospered or declined in direct ratio to their natural resources.

On this continent we were blessed with the greatest abundance of natural resources that ever existed on the face of the earth. Despite our wanton wastage of these resources as our country pushed back its frontiers, we still have enough of them to keep us prosperous, well fed, well clothed, and safe -- if we conserve these resources as we use them.

Less than a quarter century ago we began to wake up to the problem of soil erosion. Gullies that had been accepted as a natural part of the

landscape became a symbol of neglect.

Our first nationwide efforts were directed toward the seriously eroded land. We call it erosion control. A little later we began to emphasize work on the lands that had not yet been seriously damaged by gullyng. We called this soil conservation instead of erosion control. Today we use still a better term. We call it soil and water conservation.

We have built a great national program of soil and water conservation. We have learned much about the techniques of planning and applying conservation to our land. We are making progress, but we have barely made a good beginning.

A striking example of what can happen to our Minnesota land in a matter of hours occurred June 16 and 17. On those two days a storm of flood-producing proportions struck about 10 counties in the southwestern part of our state.

The floods produced by this storm caused widespread damages to property, roads, utilities, bridges. We can place a dollar value on these losses. But the damage to the land itself was even more pronounced.

Soil conservation experts estimated that about 179 million tons of soil "moved" during the flood. Some was carried away in streams and rivers, some washed off fields into lowlands where it covered up crops and clogged roadside and drainage ditches.

The soil that moved, regardless of its final resting place, was lost forever for the production of food and fiber. Can we place a dollar value on these 179 million tons of precious soil? I think not. Who can say what a ton of soil is worth in terms of generations to come who would have eaten food grown on it?

Land protected by good soil and water conservation practices suffered far less damage than unprotected land in this storm. Even though many of the measures farmers had installed were not designed for a storm of this magnitude,

all the conservation work, such as contour stripcropping, terraces, grass waterways, farm ponds and detention structures, stood up extremely well.

Unfortunately, probably less than 10 percent of the farmers had installed the soil and conservation measures needed to adequately protect their land.

This storm helps to explain the new emphasis on water by the farm people of America.

Farmers have always had to deal with too much water, or too little water, but today new forces are at work. The consumption of water on farms has increased tremendously because of widespread use of electricity and electric pumps, hot water heaters, kitchen sinks, automatic washers, and other modern conveniences.

Towns and cities and industries have increased their use of water even more than farms. Air conditioning is just one example. And water needs will continue to increase as our population increases.

This has brought about competition for available water. There is competition among farms, and competition between farms and towns. This is a new situation in a large part of the country where water once was as free as air.

The farmer is emerging as a key figure in our growing water problem. More than 80 percent of our total water supply comes from surface water. Most of this supply falls on farmland. It runs off fields and woods and into streams or into reservoirs, or it percolates into underground storage where it feeds wells.

Water management and land management go hand in hand; they are so interrelated as to be inseparable. Soil erosion by the movement of surface water cannot be controlled without controlling the movement of surface water. How the farmer manages his land, therefore, is the key to water management.

Our national soil and water conservation program has kept pace with the changing times and the changing needs.

It all began in 1935 when the Congress created the Soil Conservation Service and directed it to develop and carry out a national program for the protection and improvement of our soil and water resources.

In 1937, the States began to pass soil conservation district laws, which authorized farmers to organize and run their own conservation programs at the county or watershed level with the technical assistance of the Soil Conservation Service.

The spread of soil conservation districts has been unprecedented in our agricultural history. Today there are more than 2,759 soil conservation districts and 11 other conservation districts being assisted by the SCS in 48 States, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Hawaii, and Alaska. Eighteen States and Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands are completely covered by soil conservation districts.

About 88 percent of the land in farms and 93 percent of the farms in continental United States is in soil conservation districts. More than 1,700,000 farmers and ranchers owning more than 500 million acres of land are cooperating with these districts in installing conservation programs on their lands.

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Budget Bureau

Here in Minnesota we now have 75 soil conservation districts. These districts have more than 34,000 cooperators owning more than 7 million acres of land. Nearly 4,000 farmers became cooperators during the past year.

At the Federal level we have helped soil conservation districts by providing them with the technical services of the Soil Conservation Service, and by providing programs of research, credit, education, and cost-sharing for soil and water conservation. We provided for direct and insured loans for certain soil and water conservation measures. We revised the Internal Revenue Law to permit farmers to deduct from their income taxes certain expenditures made for soil and water conservation measures.

The newest tool we have provided, and one of the most important, is the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act, which the Congress passed in 1954 and broadened considerably by amendments in 1956.

This law supplements existing soil and water conservation programs in a very important way. It bridges the gap that had long existed between the conservation work on individual farms and the large protective measures for flood control on major streams. In between was a no-man's-land--our small watersheds--where the job was too big for individuals and too small for the big downstream program.

The small watersheds of our country had long been neglected. More than half the nation's \$1.2 billion average annual floodwater and sediment damage occurs on the headwater streams and small tributaries. About seven-tenths of this damage is agricultural.

The new watershed protection and flood prevention act strengthens our national soil and water conservation program immeasurably. It provides for Federal technical and financial assistance in helping ^{the} local

people plan and carry out projects that combine conservation treatment of farmlands in small watersheds with small floodwater retarding dams and other structures. It also provides for long-term, low-interest loans to local communities to help them pay their share of the cost.

Watershed projects under this act are intended to prevent, or alleviate greatly, the kind of damages that occurred in our Minnesota flood this past June.

↳ The widespread interest in small watershed projects is concrete evidence that there is great need for this work. Applications for assistance in watershed projects have been submitted by 741 local organizations in 46 states and Hawaii. Of this number, 278 in 45 states have been authorized for planning assistance and 54 in 30 states are actually under way.

↳ Local organizations in Minnesota have submitted 20 applications for assistance in watershed projects. Of this number, four have been authorized for planning assistance and one is actually in operation. It is the Rush-Pine Watershed, 88,000 acres, in Fillmore, Houston, and Rush Counties.

↳ In addition, Minnesota has two of the 54 pilot watershed projects that were started in 1954 as a forerunner of watershed protection and flood prevention projects. They are the Chippewa near Benson and the East Willow near Preston.

I believe in these small watershed projects. They are important to every American.

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The problems of our major river basins are a compound of the problems of their lesser drainage areas--the small watersheds--and these problems can be solved best by going back to this source.

Small watersheds are the logical place to begin programs for soil and water conservation, flood prevention, siltation reduction, water supplies for agricultural, domestic and industrial use, and increased recreational opportunities.

Thousands of our small watersheds need the benefits of conservation land treatment combined with small upstream dams and other improvements.

The watershed protection and flood prevention program offers that opportunity. And it offers it in the right way--at the initiative of, and under the control of, the local people.

These are not public works projects. They are developed by the local people, and they are approved by the state. The local people plan them, build them, help pay for them, and operate them and maintain them. The U. S. Department of Agriculture, acting primarily through the Soil Conservation Service, provides technical and financial help to the local people in carrying out these projects. They are local projects with Federal assistance, not Federal projects with local assistance.

This program is handled through the Department of Agriculture because it is an agricultural program. The key to its success is conservation treatment and management of privately owned farmlands. Farmers and the agricultural agencies working with them, particularly soil conservation districts and their junior partner, the Soil Conservation Service, are best equipped by experience and established working relationships to deal with soil and water conservation problems of the land.

I'm proud to be an ardent supporter of our national soil and water conservation and watershed protection programs.

I see in them the key to the future prosperity and welfare of our country. Because I believe this, I shall not hesitate to criticize when I think these programs aren't being handled properly.

In general, ~~the executive branch of~~ the Federal Government is handling its soil and water conservation responsibilities effectively and efficiently. But I must call to your attention one important exception.

The Bureau of the Budget, which is directly attached to the White House, has been throwing roadblocks into the ~~small~~ watershed program.

Here we have the unusual spectacle of an arm of the White House itself "sitting on" a program that the Administration has endorsed wholeheartedly. The Budget Bureau is withholding from Congress projects that have been approved by the local people, by the State, and by the Department of Agriculture, for which plans have been completed and money appropriated.

The Budget Bureau is acting arbitrarily and capriciously in this matter. It appears that the Budget Bureau is making up its own rules instead of following those prescribed by Congressional legislation and the procedures set up by the Administration of which it is a part.

We have reached an odd state of affairs when one Federal agency can, without cause, block the will of the people, of Congress, of the Department of Agriculture, and of the Administration itself.

A joint committee of the Senate of the United States is checking into the Budget Bureau's delaying tactics on small watershed projects, and I predict we can expect some action soon.

I have greatly enjoyed this day with you. I congratulate you on this splendid event. It is truly inspiring.

This day with you has strengthened my conviction that the soil and water resources of Minnesota and of the United States are in safe hands. Let us renew our pledge not to be complacent about this land of ours. We cannot afford to relax, or to let up on our efforts. Productive land, which in turn means protected and improved soil and water resources, constitutes our first line of defense, the foundation of our way of life--the one thing above all others that we must cherish to preserve our civilization.



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