

Public Law 95-192
95th Congress

An Act

To provide for furthering the conservation, protection, and enhancement of the Nation's soil, water, and related resources for sustained use, and for other purposes.

Nov. 18, 1977
[S. 106]

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That this Act may be cited as the "Soil and Water Resources Conservation Act of 1977".

Soil and Water
Resources
Conservation Act
of 1977.
16 USC 2001
note.

FINDINGS

SEC. 2. The Congress finds that:

(1) There is a growing demand on the soil, water, and related resources of the Nation to meet present and future needs.

(2) The Congress, in its concern for sustained use of the resource base, created the Soil Conservation Service of the United States Department of Agriculture which possesses information, technical expertise, and a delivery system for providing assistance to land users with respect to conservation and use of soils; plants; woodlands; watershed protection and flood prevention; the conservation, development, utilization, and disposal of water; animal husbandry; fish and wildlife management; recreation; community development; and related resource uses.

(3) Resource appraisal is basic to effective soil and water conservation. Since individual and governmental decisions concerning soil and water resources often transcend administrative boundaries and affect other programs and decisions, a coordinated appraisal and program framework are essential.

16 USC 2001.

DEFINITIONS

SEC. 3. As used in this Act:

(1) The term "Secretary" means the Secretary of Agriculture.

(2) The term "soil, water, and related resources" means those resources which come within the scope of the programs administered and participated in by the Secretary of Agriculture through the Soil Conservation Service.

(3) The term "soil and water conservation program" means a set of guidelines for attaining the purposes of this Act.

16 USC 2002.

DECLARATIONS OF POLICY AND PURPOSE: PROMOTION THEREOF

SEC. 4. (a) In order to further the conservation of soil, water, and related resources, it is declared to be the policy of the United States and purpose of this Act that the conduct of programs administered by the Secretary of Agriculture for the conservation of such resources shall be responsive to the long-term needs of the Nation, as determined under the provisions of this Act.

16 USC 2003.

(b) Recognizing that the arrangements under which the Federal Government cooperates with State soil and water conservation agencies and other appropriate State natural resource agencies such as those concerned with forestry and fish and wildlife and, through conservation districts, with other local units of government and land users,

have effectively aided in the protection and improvement of the Nation's basic resources, including the restoration and maintenance of resources damaged by improper use, it is declared to be the policy of the United States that these arrangements and similar cooperative arrangements should be utilized to the fullest extent practicable to achieve the purpose of this Act consistent with the roles and responsibilities of the non-Federal agencies, landowners and land users.

(c) The Secretary shall promote the attainment of the policies and purposes expressed in this Act by—

(1) appraising on a continuing basis the soil, water, and related resources of the Nation;

(2) developing and updating periodically a program for furthering the conservation, protection, and enhancement of the soil, water, and related resources of the Nation consistent with the roles and program responsibilities of other Federal agencies and State and local governments; and

(3) providing to Congress and the public, through reports, the information developed pursuant to paragraphs (1) and (2) of this subsection, and by providing Congress with an annual evaluation report as provided in section 7.

Reports to
Congress and
public.

APPRAISAL

16 USC 2004.

SEC. 5. (a) In recognition of the importance of and need for obtaining and maintaining information on the current status of soil, water, and related resources, the Secretary is authorized and directed to carry out a continuing appraisal of the soil, water, and related resources of the Nation. The appraisal shall include, but not be limited to—

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(1) data on the quality and quantity of soil, water, and related resources, including fish and wildlife habitats;

(2) data on the capability and limitations of those resources for meeting current and projected demands on the resource base;

(3) data on the changes that have occurred in the status and condition of those resources resulting from various past uses, including the impact of farming technologies, techniques, and practices;

(4) data on current Federal and State laws, policies, programs, rights, regulations, ownerships, and their trends and other considerations relating to the use, development, and conservation of soil, water, and related resources;

(5) data on the costs and benefits of alternative soil and water conservation practices; and

(6) data on alternative irrigation techniques regarding their costs, benefits, and impact on soil and water conservation, crop production, and environmental factors.

(b) The appraisal shall utilize data collected under this Act and pertinent data and information collected by the Department of Agriculture and other Federal, State, and local agencies and organizations. The Secretary shall establish an integrated system capable of using combinations of resource data to determine the quality and capabilities

for alternative uses of the resource base and to identify areas of local, State, and National concerns and related roles pertaining to soil and water conservation, resource use and development, and environmental improvement.

(c) The appraisal shall be made in cooperation with conservation districts, State soil and water conservation agencies, and other appropriate citizen groups, and local and State agencies under such procedures as the Secretary may prescribe to insure public participation.

(d) The appraisal shall be completed by December 31, 1979, and at each five-year interval thereafter during the period this Act is in effect.

Public participation.

Completion dates.

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION PROGRAM

SEC. 6. (a) The Secretary is hereby authorized and directed to develop in cooperation with and participation by the public through conservation districts, State and national organizations and agencies, and other appropriate means, a national soil and water conservation program (hereinafter called the "program") to be used as a guide in carrying out the activities of the Soil Conservation Service which assist landowners and land users, at their request, in furthering soil and water conservation on the private and non-Federal lands of the Nation. The program shall set forth direction for future soil and water conservation efforts of the United States Department of Agriculture based on the current soil, water, and related resource appraisal developed in accordance with section 5 of this Act, taking into consideration both the long- and short-term needs of the Nation, the landowners, and the land users, and the roles and responsibilities of Federal, State, and local governments in such conservation efforts. The program shall also include but not be limited to—

Development.
16 USC 2005.

Contents.

(1) analysis of the Nation's soil, water, and related resource problems;

(2) analysis of existing Federal, State, and local government authorities and adjustments needed;

(3) an evaluation of the effectiveness of the soil and water conservation ongoing programs and the overall progress being achieved by Federal, State, and local programs and the landowners and land users in meeting the soil and water conservation objectives of this Act;

(4) identification and evaluation of alternative methods for the conservation, protection, environmental improvement, and enhancement of soil and water resources, in the context of alternative time frames, and a recommendation of the preferred alternatives and the extent to which they are being implemented;

(5) investigation and analysis of the practicability, desirability, and feasibility of collecting organic waste materials, including manure, crop and food wastes, industrial organic waste, municipal sewage sludge, logging and wood-manufacturing residues, and any other organic refuse, composting, or similarly treating such materials, transporting and placing such materials onto the

land to improve soil tilth and fertility. The analysis shall include the projected cost of such collection, transportation, and placement in accordance with sound locally approved soil and water conservation practices;

(6) analysis of the Federal and non-Federal inputs required to implement the program;

(7) analysis of costs and benefits of alternative soil and water conservation practices; and

(8) investigation and analysis of alternative irrigation techniques regarding their costs, benefits, and impact on soil and water conservation, crop production, and environmental factors.

Completion
dates.

(b) The program plan shall be completed not later than December 31, 1979, and be updated at each five-year interval thereafter during the period this Act is in effect.

REPORT TO CONGRESS

16 USC 2006.

SEC. 7. (a) On the first day Congress convenes in 1980 and at each five-year interval thereafter during the period this Act is in effect the President shall transmit to the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President of the Senate, the appraisal and the program as required by sections 5 and 6 of this Act, together with a detailed statement of policy regarding soil and water conservation activities of the United States Department of Agriculture.

(b) Commencing with the fiscal year ending September 30, 1982, the President shall, not later than thirty days after the submission of the budget for each fiscal year, prepare and transmit to Congress a report expressing in qualitative and quantitative terms the extent to which the programs and policies projected under the budget meet the statement of policy submitted under subsection (a) of this section. In any case in which the budget recommends a course which fails to meet the statement of policy, the President shall set forth in his report under this subsection the reasons for requesting Congress to approve the lesser program or policies presented in the budget.

(c) The Secretary, during budget preparation for fiscal year 1982 and annually thereafter during the period this Act is in effect, shall prepare and transmit to the Congress, through the President, a report to accompany the budget which evaluates the program's effectiveness in attaining the purposes of this Act. The report, prepared in concise summary form with appropriate detailed appendices, shall contain pertinent data from the current resource appraisal required to be prepared by section 5 of this Act, shall set forth the progress in implementing the program required to be developed by section 6 of this Act, and shall contain appropriate measurements of pertinent costs and benefits. The evaluation shall assess the balance between economic factors and environmental quality factors. The report shall also indicate plans for implementing action and recommendations for new legislation where warranted.

Legislative
recommendations.

AUTHORIZATION FOR APPROPRIATIONS

SEC. 8. There are authorized to be appropriated such funds as may be necessary to carry out the purposes of this Act. 16 USC 2007.

EFFECTIVE DATE

SEC. 9. In the implementation of this Act, the Secretary shall utilize information and data available from other Federal, State, and local governments, and private organizations and he shall coordinate his actions with the resource appraisal and planning efforts of other Federal agencies and avoid unnecessary duplication and overlap of planning and program efforts. 16 USC 2008.

SEC. 10. The provisions of this Act shall terminate on December 31, 1985. Termination date. 16 USC 2009.

Approved November 18, 1977.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY:

HOUSE REPORT No. 95-344 accompanying H.R. 75 (Comm. on Agriculture).
SENATE REPORT No. 95-59 (Comm. on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry).
CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, Vol. 123 (1977):

Mar. 23, considered and passed Senate.

June 6, considered and passed House, amended, in lieu of H.R. 75.

Nov. 2, Senate concurred in House amendments with an amendment.

Nov. 3, House agreed to Senate amendment.