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INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR WATERSHED PROGRAMS *

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Conservation of soil and water resources has received a great deal of attention the last two decades. Thus far, however, the emphasis has been on land-treatment measures such as terraces, contour farming, grassed waterways, and farm ponds. Generally, these measures have been accompanied by changes in tillage practices, improved rotations, and use of fertilizers. Another phase of conservation, which has received much less attention until recently, is the reduction of flood damages by building gully-control structures, retarding reservoirs, drainage ditches, stream-bank stabilization works, and other protective devices. These structural controls are designed to reduce soil loss, provide for more orderly runoff of water, and in other ways reduce flood damage.

A watershed-development program, as the term is now used, consists mainly of an acceleration in the adoption of land-treatment measures by landowners, plus construction of soil and water-control structures, the benefits of which are largely off-site. In some situations, watershed development may also include programs for major changes in land use.

Background of Watershed Programs

Although the idea of flood control by watershed programs originated many years ago, it received its first big impetus in 1934 with the creation of what later became the Soil Conservation Service. The earliest work of this agency on demonstration projects was organized along watershed lines. For several years, however, the primary emphasis was on the individual farm approach. This was probably necessary in order to develop the local initiative and organization required for a new action program. But as the land-treatment job progressed, more attention was given to the watershed concept.

The Flood Control Act of 1944 authorized USDA to install works of improvement for runoff and water-flow retardation and soil-erosion prevention on 11 rather large watersheds. ^{1/} These projects were to be planned

* Ideas and opinions in this paper are those of the authors and do not necessarily express the views of the ARS or other agencies of USDA.

^{1/} Public Law No. 534, 78th Congress, 2nd Session. Act of December 22, 1944. For an early description of this program, see "Agricultural Flood Control Program," by H. H. Wooten, Journal of Land & Public Utility Economics, 22:35, February 1946.

and installed cooperatively with local interests over a long-time period under the direction of the Soil Conservation Service and the Forest Service. Work has been carried out by small sub-watersheds within each project area. It is estimated that the 11 projects range from about 20 to 35 percent of completion at the present time.

In 1953, the Congress included an item of \$5,000,000 in the 1954 appropriation for the Department of Agriculture for "watershed protection." The announced purpose was to provide funds for a cooperative program with local organizations to demonstrate the practicability of complete watershed protection for soil and water conservation, alleviation of flood damage, and reduction of silt problems. Primary responsibility for the program was assigned to the Soil Conservation Service and Forest Service. About 60 small watershed projects in 34 States are being considered under this program. Most of these are still in the planning stage, although construction has been started in a few cases. These projects are to be completed over a period of about 5 years. The total cost is estimated at some \$60,000,000 of which about half will be borne by the Federal Government and half, by individual landowners, local organizations and State agencies.^{2/}

In addition to these specially authorized watershed projects, the Soil Conservation Service has assisted with the planning and construction of several other successful small watershed programs in cooperation with various State and Federal agencies and local landowners, such as the Brown's Canyon project in western Nebraska, the Four Districts Watershed in eastern Iowa, and a large number of water-management projects in various parts of the country. These projects did not require Congressional authorization because all construction funds came from sources other than USDA appropriations, the Soil Conservation Service merely supplying technical and advisory assistance.

The Hope-Aiken Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act, recently passed by the Congress and approved by the President, emphasizes the idea of local-State-Federal cooperation in watershed programs. ^{3/} In view of the fact that this act may establish policies under which USDA will participate in watershed programs for some years to come, we should say a few words about it:

(1) The Secretary of Agriculture is authorized to assist local organizations in developing plans for works of improvement on a watershed basis upon the approval of the application of a local organization by the authorized State agency (or Governor of the State). If this State agency

^{2/} For a description of this program, see "The Small Watershed Gets Attention," by Erwin C. Ford, Soil Conservation Magazine, Vol. XVIII, No. 9, Dec. 1953, pp. 106-114.

^{3/} Public Law No. 566, 83rd Congress, 2nd session.

or official does not disapprove an application within 45 days, the Secretary and the local organization can proceed with the planning work. Presumably, this means that watershed projects are to be initiated by the local people themselves and that the States are to provide some degree of coordination among watershed programs within their boundaries.

(2) The small watershed is to be the basic work unit. Each watershed project is not to exceed 250,000 acres in size, although a number of such watersheds which comprise parts of a larger basin may be planned together if the local sponsoring organizations so request.

(3) Structures are to be comparatively small. Those with capacities larger than 5,000 acre-feet are prohibited and all plans which contain structures with capacities of 2,500 to 5,000 acre-feet must be approved by resolution of the Senate and House Committees on Agriculture before appropriations can be made. Structures smaller than 2,500 acre-feet capacity can be built without special Congressional approval.

(4) The local sponsoring organization is to install the structures, generally by contracting with construction firms. In those States where the local organization lacks authority to enter into construction contracts, the Secretary of Agriculture may enter into such contracts, but this authority is to expire on July 1, 1956.

(5) The local organization must acquire all lands and rights-of-way needed for structures, assume an equitable share of the construction cost, arrange for operation and maintenance of structures, secure the necessary water rights, and get agreements to carry out soil conservation practices from the owners of at least half of the lands in the watershed above the structures.

(6) The Hope-Aiken Act does not provide any appropriations nor establish any other limitation on the amount of cooperative watershed-protection work to be undertaken by USDA. Presumably, Congress will make these decisions annually after reviewing the status of the work. The President requested Congress to provide a supplemental appropriation of \$3,000,000 for this work during the 1955 fiscal year.

The importance of the structure and functions of local organization in cooperative flood-control programs was not fully appreciated at first. The early USDA flood-control reports, for example, usually did not devote more than one or two paragraphs to the local organizational aspects of proposed programs. Although there is a fairly large and growing body of technical literature on the biological, hydrological, and economic aspects of watershed programs, only a few publications and technical papers are available on organizational aspects. 4/

4/ The more significant of these contributions are: (1) Raymond Carmon and Nick K. Kittrie, "A Comparative Study of Watershed Legislation," Special Report No. 28, Bureau of Government Research, University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas, September, 1952; (2) Otto H. Liebers, "Local Responsibilities and Organization of Watershed Programs," Salt-Wahoo Watershed

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The 11 authorized flood-control projects demonstrated the need for adequately empowered local organizations and the Hope-Aiken Act, in attempting to rectify previous shortcomings, places various responsibilities squarely on the local sponsoring organizations. This has stimulated interest in finding answers to such questions as: "What type of local organization is most appropriate?" "What functions should it perform?" "What powers will it need to carry out these functions?" "How should the local organization be financed?" Research is underway on these and similar questions at the Nebraska and the North Dakota Agricultural Experiment Stations in cooperation with the Agricultural Research Service, USDA. A proposal is now being considered by several USDA agencies to expand this type of study.

Functions of the Local Watershed Organization

If a watershed project is to be carried out successfully, the local organization must assume certain responsibilities and perform certain functions. There are both practical and legal reasons for this.

Information and education.-- A watershed-protection program, by the very nature of things, is a community-wide venture. A vast majority of the local people must understand the need for the proposed development; otherwise they cannot be expected to regard themselves as part of it and will distrust or even oppose it. An intensive education program is a prerequisite to the informed, active participation of local residents. Each landowner, farmer, and business-man in the watershed continually needs to have current information regarding project plans and programs in order to plan his own affairs accordingly.

Negotiating agreements with landowners to carry out watershed measures, including soil-conservation practices on lands above structures, is made a local function by the Hope-Aiken Act. Preparation for such negotiations is part of the educational process. The local organization must assume responsibility for a major share of the promotional and educational work, because

4/ (Continued) Association, Lincoln, Nebraska (paper read at meeting of Great Plains Agricultural Council, August 3, 1951); (3) Harry A. Steele, "Some Economic Problems of Local Organization for Watershed Programs in the Missouri Basin," Bureau of Agricultural Economics, USDA (paper read at meeting of Great Plains Agricultural Council, August 3, 1951); (4) Stanley Voelker, Giles H. Penstone, Kris Kristjanson, and John Muehlbeier, "Local Organization for Participation in Water-Development Projects and Watershed Programs," mimeographed report prepared by Bureau of Agricultural Economics and Solicitor's Office, USDA, at the request of the Missouri Basin Survey Commission, August 1952; and (5) John Muehlbeier, "Watershed Districts for Local Participation in Resource Programs," Bureau of Agricultural Economics, USDA (paper read at meeting of Missouri Basin Inter-Agency Committee, January 28, 1953).

people naturally tend to look to their own local leaders. Moreover, the educational work is a big job -- too big for the limited personnel USDA is able to assign to each project to do by themselves even if they wanted to take on this function. In a little watershed project in North Dakota, for example, soil conservation district supervisors and the county extension agent conducted 40 community meetings during a few weeks last winter prior to the adoption of the final watershed plan. In addition, they prepared news releases, announcements, and posters; arranged tours over the project area; and conducted conservation contests among local schools. SCS technicians assisted in the preparation of materials used in this educational effort and were present at some of the meetings to help answer questions raised by local people. But the key to the success of the educational effort was the fact that the county agent and local leadership knew when, where, and how to hold community meetings.

Planning and surveys.--- Project planning is frequently regarded as the prerogative of engineers and other technicians. Nevertheless, the local organization can and should contribute to the planning process. Surveying and planning are expensive and time-consuming processes that can be greatly facilitated by local participation. Much of the information must be obtained from local residents and their interested cooperation should reduce the time and expense of surveys. Of even more importance, it will help them feel that the plan is one in which they have a part.

Often there is controversy as to the type of program that should be undertaken, not only because of a lack of facts about the situation, but also because of differences in opinion and in the interpretation of available data. Technicians sometimes are tempted to present a single development plan to the local people, with no indication that possible alternatives were fully explored and adequately evaluated. In some cases, it may be desirable for the local organization to hire its own technicians and consultants to review possible alternatives.

The local organization and its governing board can provide the focal point at which the technicians' plan can be adjusted to meet the desires and ideas of local people. The watershed project, mentioned previously, provides a good illustration of this process. The automatic outlet works of the 18 water-detention dams proposed for this project were originally designed by SCS to release flood impoundments over a 20-day period. Local people, with vivid memories of dry stream beds during the droughts of the 1930's, requested that 50 percent of the impoundments be released during the 20-day period and the other 50 percent, over a 5 months' period. To meet this request, SCS re-designed the outlet works, but the assurance of perennial streams below the dams is of considerable importance to farmers depending upon these streams for stockwater.

Construction and installation of structures.--- For projects constructed under both the 1954 watershed-protection program and the Hope-Aiken Act, the local organization must obtain all lands and rights-of-way needed for reservoirs, ditches, dikes, and other major flood-control structures. Land-owners sometimes become quite resentful when a Federal agency attempts to

secure private property for public purposes. Usually, a local organization can obtain rights-of-way from private landowners at lower cost and with fewer condemnation proceedings than can a Federal agency.

The Hope-Aiken Act requires the local organization to assume responsibility for letting construction contracts for installing structures. In most instances, USDA engineers will assist with the preparation of plans and specifications upon which bidding and contracts will be based. In many States, letting construction contracts will be a new function for local conservation organizations and this may occasion some delay and confusion at first. In other States, however, little difficulty is anticipated -- adequate statutory provisions are in effect and local officials and the construction industry have become familiar with the required procedures in connection with small drainage and water-disposal projects.

Operation and maintenance of structures.-- The quality of maintenance work is extremely important, because the major test of a watershed program in terms of flood control may not come until years after installation. Moreover deferred maintenance may result in deterioration of structures and eventually in high costs for rehabilitation or replacement.

Under the earlier USDA watershed programs, it was implied that local organizations would assume responsibility for operation and maintenance of constructed works. This has been a troublesome aspect of the program on some projects. The Hope-Aiken Act undertakes to prevent such situations from arising by requiring firm commitments for future maintenance by local organization prior to approval of USDA's participation in the project. If the local organization has the necessary financial ability, negotiating a maintenance agreement should not pose any serious problem, providing the agreement is signed before the structures are built. One procedure established in some of the current agreements is a periodic inspection of the structures jointly by USDA technicians and officials of the sponsoring organization, after which a schedule of the amount, kind, and timing of needed maintenance work is agreed upon. The local organization then performs the work, either with its own equipment and employees or by contracting with other agencies or private firms.

Financing.-- The financial functions of local organizations are of crucial importance, because they involve answering such basic questions as "Who pays for what?" The history of other types of local resource-development enterprises -- irrigation, drainage and levee projects -- over the past 50 years indicates that a local organization is more apt to fall down in the performance of financial functions than in carrying out others.

A watershed organization will need funds for various purposes. It may have to incur expenses in getting its program underway. It may have to pay certain organizational costs for public hearings, legal fees, travel expense of its officers, and publishing legal notices. After its program reaches the construction and operational stages, it may have some administration and overhead expenses. Although neither the initial organizational expense nor the administrative overhead are expected to be large, it makes it much easier

for such an organization to initiate and carry out its program if funds are definitely made available for these purposes.

The construction of water-retarding dams, gully-control structures, ditches, and other protective works call for large investments by both the local organization and the Federal Government. Under the 1954 Watershed Protection program, the objective was to have local organizations bear 50 percent of the cost of the program as a whole, taken on a national, overall basis. An administrative interpretation of this requirement permitted the local organization to be credited with certain amounts it had spent previously for watershed protection and flood-control purposes in the computation of the shares of the new construction cost to be borne by the local organization and the Federal Government. There is some danger of such a provision being abused to the point where it practically nullifies the 50-50 cost-sharing idea, with the result that the Federal Government carries nearly all of the new construction cost.

The Hope-Aiken Act does not establish any cost-sharing formula. Instead it requires that the local organization shall provide the necessary land and rights-of-way for the improvement works and shall "assume such proportionate share of the cost of installing any works of improvement involving Federal assistance as may be determined by the Secretary (of Agriculture) to be equitable in consideration of anticipated benefits from such improvements." 5/ This provision is capable of a variety of interpretations. About all that can be said definitely at this time is that USDA has been given the responsibility of working out cost-sharing arrangements with the local organization on each project, that the Federal contribution may vary from one project to another, and that in most cases the local share probably will have to be quite substantial.

It would seem then, that the local organization needs to have the financial ability to raise large sums of money for construction purposes. If the construction work is done over a period of several years, the local organization may be able to finance its share of the cost out of annual revenues. On the other hand, if the work is to be done during a relatively short period, the local organization should be empowered to incur indebtedness, that is, to register its warrants or to sell bonds.

Another cost which the local organization will have to be prepared to meet is annual maintenance expense. In the past, enabling acts under which many improvement programs were organized were extremely faulty in that they failed to provide local organization with adequate funds for maintenance.

In addition to regular annual maintenance, the local organization probably should be prepared to replace certain structures of the watershed program which have served their useful life or have been severely damaged.

5/ Public Law No. 566. 83rd Congress, 2nd session, Sec. 4.

Hence, it may be desirable to authorize the establishment of sinking funds for replacements out of current revenues.

Where is the local organization going to get the money needed for all of these purposes? In most cases, it will have to depend primarily on either general property taxes levied against all property within its boundaries or on special assessments levied against benefited properties, or a combination of both taxes and special assessments. It may receive some income from other sources, such as rentals on its equipment, sale of water, or lease of recreational sites, but these are not likely to be very large.

Use of general property taxes can be justified to the extent that the watershed program does benefit all property owners. The program, for example, may help protect roads, bridges, or other public property, the maintenance and replacement costs of which must be covered by local property taxes. Also, the program may provide other and more general benefits to the community. Special assessments, on the other hand, may be more appropriate where benefits to individual properties can be identified. To depend entirely on general property taxes in such a situation would enhance the value of certain lands at the expense of other taxpayers. Some combination of general property taxes and special assessments possibly will prove to be the most equitable arrangement. In a given situation, for example, the local people may decide to pay organizational, overhead, and annual maintenance costs out of general property taxes, and to finance the local share of construction and replacement costs by special assessments against benefited properties. In other watersheds a different combination may be more appropriate. The point is that the local organization needs to be given the power to meet a wide range of conditions in developing financial plans which are acceptable and seem equitable to the local people.

Regulatory functions.--- A watershed organization can do a great deal toward getting proper land use through educational work. It can also enter into agreements with landowners, which stipulate what conservation measures will be applied and maintained on the land. Usually these voluntary methods would be expected to work out satisfactorily without need for resort to regulatory powers. Once in a while, however, some landowner may adhere to practices which damage not only his own land, but also that of his neighbors; the local organization may not wish to delay its program indefinitely awaiting compliance. It could also happen that a new landowner may decide to discontinue landuse and conservation practices agreed to by the previous owner and thus jeopardize the life of a costly structure already built. To meet these problems, local people could protect their investment in structures from the damaging effect of improper land use if they were enabled to adopt and enforce land-use regulations. Some regulations may prohibit certain practices which aggravate soil erosion, while others may require landowners to follow certain practices deemed necessary to reduce or prevent erosion.

The local organization may be able to reduce flood damage on flood plains through use of zoning ordinances. Regulations could be imposed on

use of land, use or construction of buildings, density of population, and the like. Non-conforming uses which exist at the time the ordinance is adopted could be continued. New uses considered contrary to the public interest would be prevented. The ordinance thus could give direction to the orderly development of flood plains and thereby reduce the amount of flood damage. Several zoning ordinances now in effect relate to flood-plain use.

Coordination of effort.-- A watershed program requires the cooperation of a number of State and Federal agencies. This is recognized by the Hope-Aiken Act, which contains several provisions relating specifically to inter-agency cooperation.

The local organization occupies a strategic position in that it can provide the focus toward which programs of various State and Federal agencies are pointed. The local organization, in addition to its basic agreements with USDA, may have agreements with several other agencies for segments of the total program. For example, it may enter into cooperative agreements with the U. S. Geological Survey for installation of stream-flow gaging stations or with the U. S. Weather Bureau for precipitation gages. Where a township road or county bridge must be abandoned or relocated, the local organization can negotiate the necessary agreements with appropriate local governmental officials.

The variety of governmental agencies involved in a watershed program is indicated by the list of agency representatives in attendance at a recent meeting in North Dakota to go over the final plans for a local project: Flood Control District Board of Commissioners, Boards of Supervisors of three soil conservation districts, Boards of County Commissioners of two counties, Boards of County Drain Commissioners of two counties, Agricultural Extension Service of two counties, State Water Conservation Commission, State Game and Fish Department, State School of Forestry, State Agricultural Experiment Station, U. S. Soil Conservation Service, U. S. Forest Service, two county Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Committees, Corps of Army Engineers, U. S. Geological Survey, and U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Each of these agencies had participated in the planning process and most of them were being asked to contribute to the program or to make adjustments in their own programs to facilitate the work of the watershed project.

Types of Local Organization on Existing Watershed Projects

In each of the 11 authorized flood-control projects, USDA has had the cooperation of some type of local organization. In most cases USDA entered into basic agreements with soil conservation districts for developing individual farm plans and carrying out educational functions. Inasmuch as there were several districts in each project area, the activities of the various districts sometimes were coordinated by formation of watershed committees, composed of representatives from each board of supervisors, either with or without representation from other agencies. Voluntary flood-

control associations assisted in various phases of the program on some projects, particularly in educational and promotional work. In several projects, USDA was able to cooperate with other local governmental units, such as flood-control districts and water conservation districts. In Iowa, counties are authorized to participate in the construction and maintenance of structures, and one county has already done so.

It would have been desirable to have had local organizations with adequate powers to perform all the functions previously discussed, but this was not possible on most projects. The two California projects possibly are an exception to this generalization, because county flood-control districts in that State apparently do have most of the needed powers.

We do not know how many of the 60 projects in the 1954 watershed protection program are favored by adequately empowered local organizations, but the number is believed to be small. Only a few States -- including California, Kansas, Michigan, Nebraska, North Dakota, and Ohio -- have adopted enabling acts under which watershed districts of one type or another may be organized. Nor are we informed as to how adequate these enabling laws are for the job at hand.

Need for Additional Enabling Legislation

Experience with the 11 flood-control projects and the 60 watershed-protection projects indicates that additional legislation by the legislatures of most States is needed to facilitate cooperation on Hope-Aiken projects. The question which immediately arises is whether to amend present enabling acts to grant the necessary powers to existing districts or to enact enabling legislation for an entirely new type of district.

Advocates of the first approach have suggested that the soil conservation district be made the local organization for cooperative watershed programs. These districts are actively going organizations; they cover a very high proportion of the area of most States; USDA has an established policy of cooperating with them, built up over the past 17 years; and this type of district has proved to be an effective organization for carrying out some of the local functions of a watershed program, particularly promotion, education, and obtaining agreements with landowners for conservation practices. On the other hand, most soil conservation districts have not been organized along watershed lines; their boundaries more often than not follow county or township lines and cut across watershed boundaries. A tremendous amount of reorganization work would have to be done if soil conservation districts are to become the sole local sponsoring organization for Hope-Aiken projects.

Moreover, the soil conservation district lacks the financial powers needed for watershed programs. Only two States have given their districts any powers of taxation, and even in these cases the powers granted apparently are too limited for watershed programs. An attempt to amend enabling acts to grant soil conservation districts adequate financial powers may have to face considerable opposition. A certain amount of support for the

status quo can be anticipated. Landowners and supervisors of districts not immediately concerned with watershed programs may oppose any effort to change the enabling act. Similar problems would have to be faced if enabling acts for drainage districts or other types of resource-development district were to be amended to include watershed-program functions. Sometimes it is easier to enact an entirely new enabling law than to amend an act on which the existing institutional complex is based.

Another possibility would be for the soil conservation districts to co-sponsor watershed projects with other local organizations that do have the requisite powers. The co-sponsorship approach is based on the fact that the various functions which local organizations must perform in cooperative watershed programs do not necessarily have to be lodged in only one type of district on each project. Existing governmental units -- such as the county government, soil conservation district, irrigation district, and drainage organization -- could be left with those functions and programs which they now have and a watershed district could be created to perform those functions necessary to the overall program which other local units are not authorized to perform. Co-sponsorship, thus, may be the most practical solution in many situations. Its chief disadvantages are that it adds to the complexity of local government and it might result in conflicts and some duplication of effort.

The co-sponsorship approach is not entirely new. The Tongue River Watershed Protection Project in North Dakota is being co-sponsored by a water conservation and flood-control district and three soil conservation districts. The North Dakota enabling legislation grants unusually broad powers to water conservation and flood control districts. Such a district has the legal authority to do practically everything that county drain boards and soil conservation districts can do -- except enact land-use regulations -- and in addition has much broader financial powers. The governing body of this particular district, however, consistently has followed a policy of refraining from activities and functions being carried on by other local governmental units. Co-sponsorship in this situation, thus, is actually a means for reducing duplication of effort.

Enabling Legislation for Watershed Districts

Time does not permit discussion of the details of an adequate State enabling act for watershed districts, but a general description may not be out of place. The act should confer rather broad powers on the districts to plan and carry out projects in the fields of soil and water conservation, flood control, silt and pollution abatement, channel improvement, drainage, water disposal, forestation, watershed management, and others. The district would have to have the general corporate powers of local government: To sue and be sued in its corporate name, to buy and dispose of real estate and personal property, to hire and discharge employees, to exercise the right of eminent domain, to enter into agreements with other governmental agencies, to contract with private firms, and to accept gifts and contributions.

The procedure for formation of watershed districts should be simple and convenient, possibly without the necessity for a local election on the question. The governing body of the district needs to be given rather broad discretionary powers to make decisions, but matters which could affect local property owners adversely should be made subject to approval of the electorate or to the veto of a majority of property owners signing protest petitions.

The financial powers of the district should be described in considerable detail. As indicated previously, it may be desirable to give the district the power to levy both general property taxes and special assessments and to exercise some latitude in developing its own particular financial plan. But these powers cannot be unlimited. The legislature may wish to set maximum property-tax rates and establish appropriate procedures to assure landowners that special assessments are equitable and based on adequate appraisals of benefits. Detailed procedures should be established under which the district may issue debt obligations and enter into repayment contracts with State or Federal agencies. Assumption of debt probably should be subject to the approval of the electorate. Standards for accounting and periodic audits might be desirable.

The watershed district could be granted certain regulatory powers by a delegation of police power from the State. These might include regulation of stream flow and reservoir operations within its boundaries. If the county or township government does not have authority to enact zoning ordinances, or if the soil conservation district does not have authority to adopt land-use regulations, these powers could be conferred on the watershed district.

State-District Relations in Watershed Programs

The Hope-Aiken Act recognizes that each State should have the authority to exercise some control over local watershed programs, if it so desires. The State legislatures, therefore, need to consider the question of district-State relations.

The organization of a watershed district requires decision on the area to be included. Local people must take the initiative and indicate the boundaries they would like to establish. It may be desirable, however, for the State to determine whether organization of the district would be in the public interest and whether the proposed boundaries would permit development of an effective program. There may be situations, for example, where the inclusion or exclusion of certain lands would result in a better program. Then, too, the program proposed in one district may affect another district adversely or damage adjoining property outside the district. Such situations have arisen in the past in the case of drainage and other improvement districts; they could occur with watershed programs. State approval of districts prior to organization and State review of district programs may result in better programs from the viewpoint of both the local community and the State as a whole.

The job of participation in watershed programs at the State level could be assigned to some official, such as the State engineer, or to some agency, such as a resources board or water commission. The important thing would seem to be that funds and personnel are provided so that whatever office is given the assignment can handle the extra work. Too often extra assignments are made without additional funds being provided.