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Agricultural Conservation Program

Mike Mansfield 1903-2001

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Statement of Senator Mike Mansfield (D. Montana)

5-11-64

AGRICULTURAL CONSERVATION PROGRAM

Mr. President, the Agricultural Conservation Program is one example of a good program illustrating what can be done when people at the grass roots combine their efforts to conserve and improve our vital natural resources. I know of, and am proud of, the great work farmers in Montana have done through the Agricultural Conservation Program to preserve our farm and range land.

The ACP is an investment in the public interest to help insure the wise use and preservation of our basic, natural soil and water resources even as we use them. Each year through ACP, over a million farmers throughout the nation voluntarily join with their Government to carry out soil, water, woodland, and wildlife conservation practices. ACP is the one great national program through which the public is able to share in soil and water conservation accomplishments. Through this program the results of our research in the conservation field and the technical advice of many agencies, Federal and State, are actually placed in effect on the land. Much of this success is due to the contributions of the locally-elected ASC farmer committees who administer the program and the other public agencies that cooperate so wholeheartedly.

In Montana, farmers and ranchers received over \$93,800,000 through the Agricultural Conservation Program from 1936 through 1963 to establish permanent cover for soil protection, to improve cover on rangeland, to conserve and use wisely the scarce water, and to provide protection to land from wind and water erosion. It is important to remember

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that for each dollar contributed by the public, the Montana farmer, on whose farm the work was done, put up a matching dollar, or more. Thus, for every dollar invested, the public got a two-dollar return in the form of guaranteed land care and assurance of plentiful food in the future.

Under other provisions of law it is necessary for at least 75% of the farm allotment for wheat to be seeded at least one year out of three to avoid losing part or all of the farm allotment. Similar provisions apply to other basic commodities.

This forces some operators to plant a crop when they would prefer to seed the ground to grass and stop or greatly reduce grain production. They cannot afford to forego the allotment entirely because it has value in the event the unit must be sold.

By amending the basic authority for this program we can offer the small operators interested in both grain and a livestock operation a chance to advance conservation farming on their units. They may do so pursuant to the authority granted here without losing the value of the grain allotment on the unit in the event the operating unit may change hands in the future.

This amendment will not cost taxpayers a red cent. It will aid conservation and it will reduce grain production some where it can be used. At the present time, land in Soil Bank and the Great Plains program is regarded as planted for purposes.

A letter of recommendation recently received from the Montana ASC State Committee has prompted my distinguished colleague, Senator Lee Metcalf and I to have prepared for introduction legislation which would

provide the necessary changes in the law to protect the preservation of a farmer's wheat history. The Montana Committee, Viola Herak, Chairman, James Wood and Lloyd Barnard, have done an exceedingly fine job of administering the ASCS program at the State level. The proposal submitted by the Committee is another of their constructive efforts to help the farmers of the Treasure State.

Mr. President, on behalf of Senator Metcalf and myself, we have sent to the desk a bill containing these recommendations. In view of the widespread interest in the matter of protecting wheat acreage, I ask that the bill lay on the table for additional co-sponsors for one week.

The provisions of this legislation could affect some 8,000,000 acres of cropland now on participating farms in Montana.

In conclusion, Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have the text of this bill and the letter of endorsement, dated April 28, 1964, from the Montana ASC State Committee printed at the conclusion of my remarks.