Explanation of Reorganization of Soil Conservation Service

President Eisenhower's July 31, 1953, message to the Congress relative to conservation and improvement of natural resources gave emphasis to soil and water conservation, to watershed management and flood prevention, and the place of Soil Conservation Districts in carrying out the program. This message provides guide lines which I am following in carrying out the Department's responsibilities in the Nation's soil conservation program.

The President submitted, and the Congress approved, Reorganization Plan No. 2 for the U. S. Department of Agriculture. Under this authority the Department of Agriculture has prepared proposed reorganization plans to bring about greater efficiency and better service to farmers and the general public.

These plans propose certain changes in the Soil Conservation Service organizational structure to improve services to the Districts. There is no intent to dissolve or destroy the Service, nor to change our relationship to the Soil Conservation Districts. It has never been our intention to place the SCS or any of its functions in the Extension Service. I told Congressional committees during the past session of Congress that:

1. "I have no desire to see them (SCS and EXT) combined."

2. "These agencies have different functions and therefore the work ought to be done in separate organizations, separate agencies."

3. "I feel that the Soil Conservation Service must continue. It is an important one."

I am fully aware of the need for conserving and improving our agricultural resources. It is my intention that the SCS shall continue as a separate agency of the Department and that it shall continue to serve farmers through technical aid to Soil Conservation Districts. The Department of Agriculture has signed a memorandum of understanding with each Soil Conservation District. We shall continue the cooperation provided for in these memoranda.

Our objective is to place on the State Conservationists the responsibilities now in the regional offices for assistance to farmers in meeting their conservation problems.

The State offices of the Soil Conservation Service would be strengthened by the addition of technical personnel including a State Conservation Engineer, a Soil Scientist, and a Soil Conservationist. In addition, other
specialists would be located at appropriate points throughout the country from which they can best work and serve in problem areas covering more than one State. No change is contemplated in technical personnel now largely in area offices assigned to work units.

In the initial stages of getting the techniques of soil and water conservation understood and accepted, regional offices of the Soil Conservation Service provided supervisory services and administration of State programs necessary to get the program under way. In the 18 intervening years since the Soil Conservation Service was established, great accomplishments have been made in building up competent staffs in all the States, and Soil Conservation Districts have been organized in practically all of the agricultural areas of the United States.

Creating an awareness of the need for conservation has been well done. The wholehearted interest and a general effort in advancing the soil conservation movement is already evident in the work of the Soil Conservation Districts and in the support given by the farm press, radio, advertising media of commercial interests and many other organized groups. Most important of all, of course, is the competence of the farmers and ranchers who are demonstrating on their own land the values of soil and water conservation work.

The need for regional supervisory offices has, therefore, diminished to a point where it is now more efficient for the State Conservationist and his staff to assume full responsibility for the program in the State under the general policies of the national program. These State SCS offices, which have been a part of the organization for years, are staffed with highly qualified personnel headed by the State Conservationist. Technical personnel will be added to each State office.

The watershed and flood control projects will continue to be emphasized. Where these projects involve more than one State, the work on them will be coordinated. So important is this work that every effort will be made to get under way and complete as soon as possible the previously authorized projects.

The wise use of our agricultural resources is essential to our national strength. We need, and must have, a constructive program of flood prevention, sound land, forest, and water management, with greater emphasis on local leadership. It is important that farmers band together in local soil conservation districts and watershed associations, and that they take the initiative in protecting and developing our agricultural resources. The work of land and water conservation is a major task now and for the future.

October 27, 1953

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Secretary