

***Soil Conservation
Compliance:***

***Is the Leadership of the
Cooperative Extension Service at
Fault?***

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Executive Summary

This white paper discusses the conflicting role of The Cooperative Extension Service (CES) in soil conservation, and Extension's relationship with other soil-related government agencies, as well as with farmers and land owners.

By examining the attitudes noted from internal and external sources of the various agencies and farmers, the problems of compliance, soil conservation, and government efficacy in relation to CES leadership will be understood.

The CES, especially at the county level, is not in a position where it can apply political leadership, but is in a positive posture to engage in the passive leadership of an educator. Hence, the leadership of CES is not responsible for the non-compliance of soil conservation programs.

Introduction

Soil erosion has been identified as one of the five most serious environmental concerns by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (Steiner, 1986). The primary issues of soil conservation are compliance and economics (Kok, 1996). Yet, the effectiveness, attitudes, and politics of soil conservation range from humorous to deceptive to damaging.

As in most government programs, some leadership, but usually management, is required to evoke a successful response. Since, Extension personnel are educators, as opposed to enforcers (Kok, 1996), this paper will attempt to ascertain if the reasons for non-compliance are a result of ineffective leadership within the CES.

The CES is a government agency which is deeply committed to its roots. Born of the Smith-Lever Act in 1914, it sometimes came to be known as a competitive adversary to the Soil Conservation Service (SCS). Due to the decentralized nature of the CES, and to avoid any encroachment, the agency took on a "whole farm" approach. Eventually, the CES seemed to appeal to the lower income farms while SCS catered to the more affluent with greater acreage (Hardin, 1952).

The CES is the distal part of the university which brings knowledge to the taxpayer upon their request, using an approach known as andragogy – "the art and science of helping adults learn" (Adeline et al, 1990). This is fitting because farmers are not opposed to conservation (Kok, 1996) and are usually in a learning mode.

However, if a manager or landowner requests the knowledge, expertise, and experience of Extension in solving a soil conservation dilemma, and the feasible solution recommended is not implemented, there is a distinct possibility that the failure may be a result of the ineffective leadership of CES personnel.

Granted, this will not always be the case, but ineffective leadership is not uncommon within the CES. The CES is not responsible for the implementation and ultimate outcome of a land owner's attempts, or the lack of a suitable soil conservation program.

When compared with the efforts of the SCS, the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service (ASCS), and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), soil conservation is not the primary goal of the CES.

Reasons and/or incentives for soil conservation are two-fold. Either the land owner wants to preserve the soil which they do have and/or desires to qualify for the financial advantages of compliance with government programs.

According to Conservation Title XII of the 1985 Food Security Act, SCS and ASCS are to implement the policies while the role of the CES is to fulfill an educational and informational role (Clark et al, 1990). The CES has no right, as the law clearly stipulates, to inspect a farm unless invited (Kok, 1996).

The real question which needs to be answered is: *Is the Cooperative Extension Service effective in leading farmers toward compliance of soil conservation requirements and/or decreasing soil erosion, when the farmer is not legally obligated to do so?*

Problems

General

Reasons for lacking a sound and responsible soil conservation program or plan may be due to apathy, ignorance, inability to recognize or admit to an erosion problem, or frustration from bureaucracy. According to Title III, Sec. 301, a conservation plan is defined as "a document applicable to highly erodible cropland and containing the decision of the person with respect to location, land use, tillage, and conservation system and schedule for implementation" (Anon. 2, 1996).

Two surveys, with contrasting results, display the uncertain perception which CES personnel have about farmers' attitudes toward soil conservation and compliance. The first survey of 885 farmers with conservation compliance plans was conducted to ascertain reasons for non-compliance. The top five reasons are as follows (Anon. 6, 1993):

1. "Loss of money from implementing the conservation plans".
2. "Likelihood of non-compliance being detected in the country is low".
3. "Likelihood of detected violations leading to significant penalties is small in the country".
4. "The typical farmer in the country with a plan would not comply".
5. "That the plans, if implemented would not save soil".
6. "Anticipate a financial loss if compliance was met".

Ironically, a similar, but smaller survey revealed that producers tended to (Esseks et al, 1991):

1. "Expect the plans to be tolerable in their financial risks and their demands for labour and other inputs".
2. "Be aware of the disincentives to non-compliance".
3. "Assign a relatively high probability to violations being detected and leading to loss of eligibility for farm programme benefits".

Spot inspections, which were conducted in the West and Midwest, revealed that 69% of the practices, as a result of the 1985 and 1990 Farm Bills, were in compliance, while the remainder were in various degrees of expected practice. Many of the plans were deemed to be impractical since some residue requirements were not achievable with current machinery and cropping practices (Stevenson, 1990).

Yet, a study conducted prior to August, 1994 by the SCS observed that 7% of the farmers were not actively complying (Thom, 1994). The improvement in rates of compliance may be due to the statistical source.

In order for a producer to receive any type of price support or marketing assistance loans, such as those available under the Agricultural Market Transition Act and the Commodity Credit Corporation Charter Act, the producer must become subject to the regulations of conservation compliance (Anon. 2, 1996).

Government

During the past few decades, no one has been able to successfully construct a sound argument for our government being simple, fair, clear-cut, and efficient. Soil conservation is no exception. Differing points of view and definitions, discrepancies in fairness and ethics, deliberate confusion and ambiguity seem to prevail among the various agencies. The following is a list of the more common concerns which many authors have noted:

- Pre-1995 Farm Bill discouraged sound farm practices such as crop rotation to replace soil nutrients (Montee, 1995).
- Bureaucracy impedes small, racial minority farmers who can't afford to get into farming due to provisions which require an established five-year cropping history (Montee, 1995).
- President Clinton's negative stance on agricultural reforms is evident from his previous veto (Anon. 1, 1996).
- Initiation of the 1985 Farm Bill resulted in the personality of the SCS changing from the farmer's advising friend to a policy enforcer (Stevenson, 1990).
- According to the Soil and Water Conservation Service (SWCS), field office staff members were not conducting the required 7% spot inspections of conservation compliance plans (Stevenson, 1990).
- H.R. 2542, the Conservation Consolidation Regulatory Relief Act of 1995, penalizes farmers who voluntarily complied and have inadvertently rewarded those who haven't (Grossi, 1995).
- S. 1373 turns its back on the non-compliant farmers with what amounts to a reward, while compliant land owners are penalized for implementing erosion control out of concern for their own land (Benbrook, 1995).
- S.1373 causes a wait-and-see game that is played between the NRCS and the producer which would require five years to determine compliance. By the year 2002, the non-compliant farmer would win out as the authority to penalize would no longer exist (Benbrook, 1995).
- Title III, Sec 315 of the 1996 Farm Bill allows for certification of third-party personnel to conduct residue inspections (Anon. 2, 1996). Although, seemingly beneficial, if the inspector is not assigned to a specific area or domain, can the producer elect a different inspector who may have a more lenient record? This scenario is too similar to that of the Federal Aviation Administration's policy of designating flight examiners who are not government employees. Pilot examinees are permitted to choose their own examiner

and since many of the examiners want to maintain rapport with the aviation community, the potential exists for the examiner to be hesitant to fail an examinee.

- A study conducted by the University of Minnesota concluded that by taking land out of production, rural communities were economically hurt by creating a decrease in prices (Anon. 3, 1994).
- According to a 1991 audit by the USDA Office of the Inspector General, 10% of the sampled tracts were not in compliance, yet, in the same year the SCS status reviews revealed that only 1.6% were non-compliant. Thus, many critics of the USDA feel that the government is very ineffective at monitoring and enforcing conservation compliance plans (Norris et al, undated).
- The burden placed upon the NRCS has caused this agency to neglect its other primary responsibilities including wildlife programs, rangeland, and pasture (Norris et al, undated).
- Most government solutions during the pre-CRP days would be considered to be too liberal by today's standards (Morgan, 1981).
- Definitions of "highly erodible" cropland differ in context between CRP and the Food Security Act of 1985, creating confusion for farmers (Dicks, 1986). An accepted definition of highly erodible land (HEL) is when the land has an erodibility index greater than eight (Benbrook, 1988).
- Assessments of erosion problems differ among employees of the SCS, CES, and ASCS (Nowak, 1987).

It is safe to say that most of our problems in soil conservation are related to not only mismanagement, but a complete lack of leadership. The aforementioned agencies are not in tune with the farmers and land owners and are lacking professional interagency rapport, as well. Indeed, one agency needs to establish itself as a leader in soil conservation.

Farmers and Land Owners

Participation in CRP is a complex decision for most farmers. Not only must they be adept at competitive bidding, they must consider the positive and negative revenue aspects of leasing the land for sportsman, potential for decreased property taxes, decreased use of machinery, loss of income due to absence of crop production, and a soil-conserving crop cover which is only reimbursable by up to 50% by the government (Knight, 1988).

One study involving USDA and ASCS members revealed that there was significant doubt as to the farmers' understanding of the compliance plans and what was expected of them (Stevenson, 1990). In addition, many farmers have doubts, or at least question their enforcement of conservation compliance plans (Stevenson, 1990).

Some farmers believe the government is trying to put them out of business (Kok, 1996). With varying opinions between the assorted agencies, many farmers may have little credibility in

personnel who are supposed to be aiding them. Thus, the major reason for non-participation is the regulatory nature of "the government's" soil conservation (Nowak et al, 1989).

Cooperative Extension Service

Overall, the agricultural community's opinion of the effectiveness of CES, on matters such as soil conservation, is poor. The following summarily listed issues are the more common and published discrepancies which are plaguing the Cooperative Extension Service.

- County Extension agents are not familiar with the various rules and regulations which are difficult to keep up with due to the numerous government programs (Kok, 1996).
- County Extension agents will retreat if SCS personnel are present. This is not an act of cowardice, but to distance themselves from their regulatory nature and to maintain a positive sense of rapport with the agricultural community (Kok, 1996).
- In a survey conducted by the University of Nebraska's Institute of Agricultural and Natural Resources (IANR) regarding who influences the program direction of CES, farmers and the general public indicated that they had only a slight influence while CES agents indicated that they had a "considerable influence over program direction (Adeline, 1990).
- In 1987, the administrator of the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service stated that today's farmers are no longer dependent upon their local Extension agent for timely information (Anon. 4, 1992).
- Generating and disseminating technical knowledge from university-based trials for adaptation to farm level is relatively ineffective as the information is poorly diffused and doesn't relate well to the human factor (Barao, 1992).
- Traditionally, the success of Extension field trials have been measured by the behavioral changes of the participants, however, Extension has failed to observe the perpetual effects of the influence of the participating farmer (Dillman, 1989).
- A superb example of the lack of cognition of success or failure by Extension personnel is demonstrated by a rainfall simulator (Ross et al, 1991). Admittedly, the demonstration team had absolutely no idea as to how influential they were to the producers. This is not indicative of a leadership problem, but more in line with ineffective management.
- The results of a Penn State University study indicated that SCS was a more useful human resource, in terms of environmental issues, than that of the local Extension offices (Radhakrishna et al, 1991).
- Another example (albeit humorous) of the ineffectiveness of Extension management (vs. leadership) are the results of a Tennessee survey regarding farm operators' attitudes of the usefulness of Extension. Its conclusion, and without any feasible explanation, is that farm operators with mortgages were more likely to find the CES useful than would part-time farmers (Pompelli et al, 1995).
- The Journal of Extension contains an abundance of redundant and meaningless surveys without any substantial conclusions or findings. Higher educated people are guided into

success by their mentors while rarely experiencing the benefits of failure. Thus, they will usually engage a safer route as opposed to the real world risks of failure. As one farmer stated: "Whenever their single-loop learning strategy fails, they become defensive, screen out criticism, and blame everyone but themselves. Their ability to learn shuts down at the very moment it's needed, diverting their attention and creative energy from vital targets. They begin to respond to the needs of "internal customers", such as co-workers, or in some cases, their own personal agenda rather than organizational goals." (Anon. 5, 1993).

- County agents are inundated with an excess of unproductive meetings, reports, and trivial administration while not engaging sufficient time with their taxpayers (Anon. 5, 1993).
- A North Carolina survey noticed three trends which allegedly interfere with the production of county agents: 1) increasing demand from public and private interest groups, 2) decreasing resources for collecting and disseminating information, and 3) responsibility for Extension shifting from the federal to state level (Hoag et al). Although no examples or logic was offered for the first problem, issue is taken with the latter two comments. Today, we are presented with more than twice the media to disseminate information than we were twenty years ago. Granted, not all farmers are equipped to handle faxes and e-mail, but twenty years ago many of them did not even have a telephone. Hoag's last comment could be argued as being more positive than negative, especially in the 1990s as the American public prefers the down-shifting in authority.
- A self-conscious attitude of "educational rank" and tenure exists, to some extent, above the county level, and an incredible amount of whining from all levels of Extension; very immature and typical of government entities.
- Historically, Extension workers have been known to double as conservation police officers (Morgan, 1981).
- In an author conducted survey, only 46% of the producers believed contact with the CES was very important. His perception of those who did make regular contact with Extension were higher educated and had a higher rate of conservation compliance (Hoban, 1990).
- There is a lack of consistency in activity between the state Extension systems, and considerable disparity exists as to whether they should be in a leadership mode when compared to the other soil-related agencies. Relationships between Extension and other federal organizations are also contrasting (Nielson, 1986).
- It's the viewpoint of one author that some Extension areas are simply not in tune with the concepts behind soil conservation (Nielson, 1986).
- Conflicting views between Extension and other federal agencies in regards to appropriate soil conserving techniques, such as conservation tillage, are not uncommon, with Extension being the incorrect agency (Nielson, 1986).
- Extension at the university level lags behind farmer's needs. One example cited a case where the farmers were promoting no-till against the advice of Extension (Kraft, 1986).

Considering the bureaucracy that Extension personnel are up against, the successful application of leadership principles would be difficult, at best. In the early 1900s, the CES agent wasn't in place with the intention of being a leader, but was in a capacity to apply assertive leadership traits which could not be engaged by today's county agents. NRCS/FSA personnel also face a hurdle with bureaucracy, often more than Extension due to their aging hierarchy.

Economics

No one can deny the existence of economic losses from erosion, but there is substantial evidence that in many areas we are wasting more money in attempts to save a little. Less than 9% of U.S. cropland has a soil loss of greater than twenty-five tons per acre per year (Buttel, 1986), yet land is considered highly erodible when its soil loss (T) is greater than 8 tons/acre/year. If we were to assume a loss of 10 tons/acre/year times 1000 acres at a value of two dollars per acre, that would equate to an annual loss of \$20,000.00. However that picture is not completely in focus. By using the 1981 economy, the value of the nitrogen, phosphorous, and potassium in a ton of soil is valued at six dollars (Morgan, 1981), which is three times higher than the previous example. Unfortunately, that's still not a complete portrayal.

There are two types of cost that directly involve the soil's effects: 1) on-site erosion which decreases the quality of the land, and 2) the off-site impact. Together, they have an annual cost ranging from \$4.4 billion to \$43.5 billion (Steiner, 1990). However, this delineation is still not complete because the government is involved; an indirect cost. The following are contradictory findings:

- On-site damages are estimated at \$1.1 billion for all U.S. cropland and off-site damages are estimated at \$4.5 billion (Ervin, 1990).
- The Conservation Foundation estimates off-site damage at \$6 billion per year (Buttel, 1986).
- At 46 million acres of highly erodible cropland, annual treatment would cost \$700 million or fifteen dollars per acre (Barbarika, 1988).
- When limiting HEL to T levels, compliance costs for 9.3 Mha in the CRP would range from \$103 million to \$2,880 million, and from \$86 million to \$2,660 million for 16.2 Mha (Huang, 1989).

Surveys and management schemes originating from government agencies are designed to save taxpayers a dollar. Yet, for every dollar which we save, we'll have to spend at least two dollars justifying it. Here are a few examples:

- The SCS budget from 1935 to 1990 was greater than \$14 billion (Steiner, 1990).
- The 50,940 acre Rebel Flat Creek watershed in the Palouse region will incur future project costs at \$2,979,000 yet its annual benefit will only amount to \$525,000 (Steiner, 1990).

- Inability to increase the cost of food to recover the cost of soil conservation due to our abundant food supply.
- Numerous articles suggest that the economic benefits of an erosive, yet productive practice, in some regions of the country, is greater than the costs of conservation compliance (Huang, 1989), while some areas show no decrease in net cash flow (Richardson et al, 1989).

Summary of Problems

One area in which there are scarce resources is the application of professional consultants and their working relationship, or lack thereof, with the various government agencies. A consultant's salary is reflective of, in part, their leadership skills, as well as their knowledge and economic foresight. Therefore, a comparison between Extension personnel and consultants would have provided a fair and proper comparative analysis as to what could be accomplished within the system.

It's a ubiquitous premise that the overwhelming majority of farmers are good stewards of their land, and without government intervention will, one way or another, decrease the amount of soil loss by an appreciable amount. With the advent of *Freedom to Farm*, such a concept will become commonplace anyway.

Misunderstandings will occur, as they do with any bureaucracy, but intentional violations will be the rare exception. Consequently, the accepted stereotype of farmers and land owners is that they are not perceived to be a part of the problem as they appear eager to accept positive and constructive leadership.

As fond as most farmers are of the CES, it is painful to state that the county level is where the greatest frustration and confusion lies. As in any hierarchy, information is never properly disseminated through the channels correctly, especially to those in the trenches. Knowledge is a leadership trait.

County Extension agents do not undergo any formal training in the laws of our country and very few seek courses in soil conservation, unless they are attempting to appease the application procedure for a job. The omnipresent pamphlets and assorted publications is Extension's primary dissemination of information and education.

When considering the county agents' restrained time factor, self-education of every aspect of agriculture is impossible. Yet the field agents of specialized agencies, such as SCS, will be well-versed in the practical application of soil conservation measures and farm bill laws.

Leadership training within Extension is practically non-existent. The county agent is and should be considered the "farmer's friend". Friends give free advice, not leadership. The CES pro-

fesses to conduct leadership training, yet, by the strictest definitions of leadership, the seminars offered are more in line with interpersonal skills and management.

Since a county agent does learn primarily through trial-and-error and self-motivation, then clearly, the local agent is not directly a part of the problem, but the Extension system is, depending on one's expectations.

Solutions

General

There is no panacea which will cure all the ailments and illnesses of our democratic form of government. With all of its flaws and idiosyncrasies, we Americans love it and love to hate it. Anyone who has viewed a legislative session has left with awe and disappointment, as one wonders if even our lawmakers possess sufficient cerebral activity regarding the needs of our country.

The majority of farmers are receptive to continuing education and improving their productivity. But, they are citizens and taxpayers with the same disgruntled attitude about government employees which we all share. The credibility of Extension workers can easily be stereotyped by one negative encounter.

The county Extension agent is not a direct part of the problem. Most of what's published indicates that they truly do enjoy assisting farmers, which is believed by most farmers. When a minor opportunity for engaging leadership skills does unveil itself, and assuming that the agent possesses such skills, they will not cower from the opportunity if it's for the benefit of the community. Again, it must be remembered that only a handful are well versed in soil conservation, thus the agents' best efforts are merely the relay of information or the invitation of a specialist.

Government

Upon installation of the first Clinton administration, a Republican House, and the subsequent ethics probes (e.g., former Secretary of Agriculture Mike Espy), positive solutions evolved; the *Freedom to Farm Bill*. As the name implies, government would finally get out of the tractor, to a degree. When compared to the dollar value of soil lost, the implementation of government conservation programs were not cost effective.

The new farm bill would not eliminate all concerns, however, the following benefits, plus a few contributions, would satisfy the overwhelming majority:

- Special incentives for the small family farm which are excluded from farm programs (Montee, 1995).
- A stewardship program which provides economic incentives for voluntary adoption of conservation practices, offer options which lower chemical use, purchase permanent conservation easements of lands which are potentially infringing on endangered species habitat, along with purchasing water rights, from willing farmers (Montee, 1995).

- Enhance the "freedom to farm" concept by eliminating barriers to crop rotation (Montee, 1995).
- Use a watershed basis to implement water quality goals (Montee, 1995).
- Maintain the programs offered in the *Minority Farmers Rights Act* of the 1990 Farm Bill along with the educational, technical, and outreach support which the program provided (Montee, 1995).
- *Freedom to Farm* bill significantly increases the flexibility and decreases the interference from our federal agencies (Anon. 1, 1996).
- *Freedom to Farm* bill decreases chemical usage, increases crop rotation, and enhances compliance by replacing the year-to-year mentality with a seven-year consistent commitment (Anon. 1, 1996).
- The *Agricultural Resources Enhancement Act of 1995* would place emphasis on land owners using their own judgment to manage the land as they see fit and with less government intervention (Benbrook, 1995).
- Title III, Sec 315 of the 1996 Farm Bill allows for self-certification of compliance at the time of application for benefits and allows local committees to provide relief in the event of undue financial hardship (Norris et al, undated).
- The concept of a "green payment" has the potential to replace price support programs in exchange for farms adopting conservation practices (Norris et al, undated).

Farmers and Land Owners

Farming is a business, and all businesses in this country which have any impact on the rest of the population are subject to legislation. The days of farming for the sake of farming are nearly history. Each day more and more men and women of agriculture are becoming involved in the legislative process. Their voice is the solution to their dilemma. Their initiatives are a leadership trait. They have influenced the country to go in the direction which they wanted it to go.

Extension

How many county Extension agents have appeared before Congress or the Senate? Not many documented cases exist, but then again many have encouraged and advised key people within industry to do just that; and with success. Much of CES' leadership is not in the form of active application but in the passive sense, for which they don't receive credit. Being in a subservient role does not allow one to take the action to be recognized as a leader.

The solutions to the leadership and internal problems which CES face are not as difficult or complex as the overall governmental picture. Consider the following suggestions:

- As an increasing number of farmers become less dependent upon the CES, while subsequently increasing the utilization of consultants and hired staff, it may become necessary for CES to shift roles with emphasis on professional development of such non-governmental specialists (Anon. 4, 1992).
- A three-year on-farm study where CES trials were performed under the scrutiny of the local farmers had a significantly higher adoption rate than utilizing information disseminated from university-based trials (Barao, 1992).
- As a result of a no-till display conducted in the Palouse region with the aid of SCS, only eight of the participating farmers immediately adopted the demonstrated procedure, yet, 164 farmers from the area converted their tillage system over a five-year period (Dillman, 1989). Accordingly, CES quite often fails to comprehend the entire results of their efforts or passive leadership.
- In most states, CES economists have spreadsheets which incorporate all factors necessary for the farmer to determine the viability of bidding for CRP benefits (Knight, 1988). Dissemination of these spreadsheets needs to be greater, such as being retrievable from Extension web sites. Another method of increasing the awareness of the spreadsheet's potential is for Extension personnel who teach soil conservation classes at the university level, to make the spreadsheets accessible for downloading.
- To increase the effectiveness of surveys produced at the state level, a plebeian but time-honored and successful method is recommended. As in industry and military, higher echelon personnel are required to spend an appreciable amount of time engaging in the same tasks as of those who they will manage or lead. Judging from the anonymous comments of those in the trenches, it would appear that it might be feasible, during the initial training of the regional and state level employees, that some time be spent at the county level as opposed to appeasing a few directors' infatuation with micro-management sessions for which there is little appreciation for.
- Extension needs to judge its success not by the opinion of its internal membership, but, by the inclination of the external customer/clientele (Anon. 5, 1993).
- Extension workers need to concentrate their efforts on the farmers' realization of the long-range physical rewards of high productivity (Morgan, 1981).
- A characteristic found to be common among farmers who did seek information from the CES, tend to have a more positive attitude about improving their farm management (Hoban, 1990).
- Suggested guidelines for the CES are to avoid partisan politics, maintain an educational posture, remain subservient to the needs of the taxpayers, and relate to the farmers their responsibility as stewards of the land and to the community (Steiner, 1990).
- Since voluntary conservation programs work best with new technologies (Phipps, 1986), I would recommend that CES explore this avenue as a means of emphasis.
- Cooperative agreements between CES and other agencies have been proven to be of merit (Lindstrom et al, 1989).

Referring back to the concept of leadership, it appears to be applied only in the passive sense. CES appears to be successful in this area but is not cognizant of it. Consequently, CES should realign its training seminars to incorporate what works best for them.

Summary of Solutions

Our democratic process works, and so does the CES. The greatest fallacy which we have with our administration is that the process is extremely slow to respond to the needs of society. Farmers and key industry officials are in a unique position to initiate the legislative process by contacting a representative to sponsor a suitable bill.

Unfortunately, whining is also the American way. Soil erosion is not going to go away and neither will the potential for true leaders. As farm acreage decreases, the productive value of the remaining land will increase. Land which contributes to off-site damage and depletes our tax dollars needs to be re-evaluated.

Conclusion

Is the Cooperative Extension Service effective in leading farmers toward compliance of soil conservation requirements? Yes, but in the passive sense. To borrow from the "Ike string concept", if a leader pulls a string from behind, it will follow in a neat and orderly fashion, but if pushed, the string will become disorderly and jumbled with no direction. The CES is neither pushing nor pulling the string, but is running up and down alongside of it with its words of wisdom and encouragement. Because of its deliberate role, CES is not in a position to apply active leadership, nor do the agents have the time to do so.

To contribute anything but knowledge and assistance would place many of the Extension workers in a controversial position as a result of taking a firm stance. They're not being paid to do that.

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