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COMMITTEE REPORT

HOUSE

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2/2/81

FURTHER: FINANCE

(11)

Date: APRIL 7, 1981

Mr. Speaker:

The Committee on RESOURCES has had HB 38

"An Act relating to the development of small farms; and providing for an effective date."

under consideration and (a majority of the committee) (the committee) reports it back with the following recommendations:

- do pass do not pass
- do pass with attached amendments(s)
- replace with CS for _____ same title
 new title
- and recommends DO PASS
- AND attaches a "Letter of Intent" New Fiscal Note
- reports it back without recommendation
- referred to the _____ Committee

**MEMBERS SIGNING
DO PASS**

T. J. Gardner

[Signature]

Eric C. Sutcliffe

[Signature]

**MEMBERS HAVING
OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS:**

J. Smith - No Rec

J. Kohn - No Rec

Rich Howard - No Rec

T. J. Gardner
Co-CHAIRMAN

[Signature]

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CRT MESSAGES ARE LIMITED TO 50 WORDS. THESE MESSAGES ARE TRANSMITTED TO JUNEAU BY OUR STAFF ON A TIME-AVAILABLE BASIS.

Date 3/10/81

Name (print) Gene Carlson

Representing _____

Address Mile 1413 1/2 Ak. Hwy

Delta Junction, Alaska 99737

Phone Number 895-4216

To Rep. Moss; House & Sen. Res Com.; Interior Delegation Members

Re HB 38- An Act Relating to the Development of Small Farms

Message A clearing loan fund should immediately be available to those of us who want to put our land into production, and make our contribution to the development of Agriculture in Alaska.

Signature Gene Carlson

Can be contacted at following times 8:00 am - 5:00 pm

Address and phone number if different from above after hours 0 895-4956

THE PRECEDING DOCUMENT(S) MAY NOT FILM
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ORIGINAL.

George Binley
Greenleaf Farms
S.R.A. #31
Homer, Ak. 99603

March 18, 1981

Mr. Terry Gardiner
House Resources Committee
Bouch. V
Juneau, Ak, 99811

Dear Mr. Gardiner and members of the House Resources Committee,

I would like to express my desire for legislative support of small scale agriculture.

We are most of us aware that the development of successful agriculture must be a multifaceted program including the development of land resources, the market, and transportation networks. It is a well understood fact that agricultural efforts without the simultaneous development of these three factors leads to only marginal productivity.

Today in Alaska we are surrounded by a growing population, an abundance of undeveloped, potentially rich agricultural land, and a nearly total reliance on a potentially tenuous transportation ~~spoke~~ corridor and system which is supplying nearly all of our foodstuffs. This reliance is not only a potential danger to Alaskans, it is also getting more expensive, and is an insult and potential disgrace to Alaska's proverbial independence.

The three factors favoring Alaska agricultural productivity are out of balance; we need increased development of every aspect in order to achieve a reasonable level of self-sufficiency; this is a patriotic duty.

In Homer there are many small farmers and ranchers such as myself who need help in getting a full time profitable operation going. Several of us are instigating the formation of the Kachemak Farmers Exchange, a farmer cooperative organized for marketing and purchasing. One of our foremost goals is the establishment of a grain silo in Homer to hold Delta barley as a feed for our expanding red meat industry. We are also working for an over the counter marketing area and a local slaughter-house facility.

Many of us are sitting on the verge of major development of grazing areas, hay fields, and/or truck farms but we lack the capital necessary for initial ground breaking. One of the drawbacks is the requirement of the Agricultural revolving loan fund that repayments to this fund come out of agricultural profits. What of the developing farmer who has little or no production at this time? If some other means could be found for establishing the "good faith" of the loan recipient, and /or if reasonable deferred payment schedules could be established giving the farmer time to get his fields into production, then I'm sure you would find considerable agricultural efforts being made.

I am in support of House Bill #38

Respectfully yours,

George Ripley
George Ripley

c.c. Senator Don Gilman
Senator Jalmar Kerttula
Rep. Hugh Malone
Rep. H. Moss
Rep. Pat O'Connell



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Agricultural
Stabilization and
Conservation Service

Alaska State ASCS Office
2221 E. Northern Lights Blvd. Suite 201
Anchorage, Alaska 99504

March 10, 1981

Resource Committee
House of Representatives
Alaska State Legislature
Pouch V
Juneau, Alaska 99811

Mr. Gardiner, Mr. Zharoff, and Members of the Committee, I wish to offer the following testimony in support of House Bill 38. I wanted to offer testimony during the teleconference hearing on Friday, March 6, but time and the number of participants prevented my doing so.

First of all, I am strongly in favor of support being given to the small farmers of Alaska. The State is now in the process of spending a great deal of money assisting the development of large scale farming ventures such as the Delta Barley Project, the Point McKenzie Project, and the other development projects planned such as Delta II and Nenana. These projects are important and necessary if the total infrastructure for the agricultural industry, especially marketing, is to be established. But we must not, in doing this, neglect another very important segment of the industry--the small farmers. In many ways these small farmers, if assisted, will provide the necessary nucleus and stability that is so necessary to the success of an industry of this kind.

House Bill 38 will provide the kind of assistance needed and is important for the following reasons: (1) To make possible the development of Alaska's small farms into more viable economic units; (2) To provide for the exercise of influence over the kind of land cleared and technical guidance on the method of clearing; and (3) To encourage, preserve and strengthen the small farms of Alaska as a continuing viable component of Alaska agriculture and the economy of the state.

I do not view assistance with land clearing as a direct subsidy. The State will be cost-sharing with farmers as an incentive to carry out necessary soil preserving measures in the development of the land. The Federal Government has been doing this for many years under the USDA Agricultural Conservation Program. Cost-sharing by the State of this nature must be looked upon as an investment in the development of an important renewable resource which will pay back dividends many fold as the agricultural industry prospers and thus adds to the overall economy and growth of the state.

Assistance in conserving and developing the prime agricultural soils is coming more and more to be considered the responsibility of the state rather than the Federal Government. Many states are already funding cost-sharing programs and more are in the making. Our new Secretary of Agriculture, Mr. John Block, has been emphasizing that the Federal Government will offer only technical assistance to protect prime agricultural land from soil erosion and loss to other uses. Mr. Block

stresses that though the continued loss of agricultural land is a "crisis in the making," state and local governments will have to take the lead in halting it. I think this is the trend and it will continue.

Past history has proven that farmers without incentives, in most instances, will not take the necessary costly measures themselves to properly conserve and protect the prime agricultural soils. We cannot expect them to do this. Land preservation and enhancement measures have long lasting effects reaching far beyond the life span of individuals. It is therefore difficult for an individual farmer to see how he will recover the costs during his lifetime.

It is the public that benefits in the long run and this is, of course, the justification for cost-sharing in the first place. We cannot expect farmers to borrow the money, even at low interest rates, to carry out long lasting conservation measures. Experience has shown that they will not. The money must be paid back with interest and most small farmers, while in the development phase of their business, can ill afford to be saddled with additional indebtedness.

For the reasons I have given, I urge passage of House Bill 38. It would undoubtedly do more for the small farmers of our state than anything else we can do now. For some 15 years, the Federal Government cost-shared for land clearing in Alaska. This has perhaps been the single most important aid over the years to the development of the agricultural base which we now have, but budget constraints will no longer allow the Federal Government to do this. It is time the State assumed this responsibility.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



CHARLES F. MARSH
State Executive Director
Agricultural Stabilization & Conservation Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture

cc:

The Honorable H. "Pappy" Moss
The Honorable Jalmer Kerttula

Funding Information
General Fund \$4,000,000
Other Funds -0-
\$4,000,000

Introduced: 2/4/81
Referred: Resources and
Finance

1 IN THE HOUSE

BY MOSS

2 *CR* HOUSE BILL NO. 75

3 IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

4 TWELFTH LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

5 A BILL

6 For an Act entitled: "An Act making a special appropriation to the Depart-
7 ment of Natural Resources; and providing for an effec-
8 tive date."

9 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:

10 * Section 1. The sum of \$^{500,000}4,000,000 is appropriated from the general fund
11 to the Department of Natural Resources for cost-sharing for the clearing and
12 breaking of land on small farms.

13 * Sec. 2. The unexpended and unobligated portion of the appropriation
14 made by this Act lapses into the general fund June 30, 1986.

15 * Sec. 3. This Act takes effect on the effective date of an Act entitled
16 "An Act relating to the development of small farms; and providing for an
17 effective date."

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Introduced: 2/4/81
Referred: Resources and
Finance

1 IN THE HOUSE

BY MOSS AND BEIRNE

2 HOUSE BILL NO. 38

3 IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

4 TWELFTH LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

5 A BILL

6 For an Act entitled: "An Act relating to the development of small farms;
7 and providing for an effective date."

8 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:

9 * Section 1. DECLARATION OF POLICY. It is the policy of the state to
10 promote the development and stability of small farms as a component of
11 Alaskan agriculture through the use of a cost-sharing program administered
12 by the department for clearing and breaking land in a manner consistent with
13 soil and water conservation policies.

14 * Sec. 2. AS 03 is amended by adding a new chapter to read:

15 CHAPTER 12. ALASKA SMALL FARM DEVELOPMENT ACT.

16 Sec. 03.12.010. ESTABLISHMENT OF PROGRAM. The department shall
17 establish and administer a program of cost-sharing for the development
18 of small farms by offering financial assistance for the clearing and
19 breaking of land to owners or holders of agricultural rights to eligible
20 land.

21 Sec. 03.12.020. ELIGIBLE LAND. (a) Only land which the depart-
22 ment determines has a soil capability classification of ~~II or III~~ ^{AS} is
23 eligible for the cost-sharing program under this chapter.

24 (b) Land which contains ^{marketable timber} ~~timber~~ with commercial value is not
25 eligible for cost-sharing money until the timber on that land has been
26 used.

27 (c) Land which is the subject of a long-term agricultural loan
28 for clearing under AS 03.10 is not eligible for cost-sharing money.

29 (d) In order for any land to be eligible for cost-sharing under

See per [unclear] during [unclear] of [unclear] 7/27/81

1 this section all the land controlled by the person applying for cost-
2 sharing must be managed in a manner consistent with the principles of
3 soil and water conservation as determined by the department or the
4 Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service of the United
5 States Department of Agriculture.

6 Sec. 03.12.025. ELIGIBLE PERSONS. If the agricultural rights to
7 eligible land are held by a person other than the owner of the land,
8 the holder of those agricultural rights is the person eligible to
9 submit the development plan and to receive the money under the cost-
10 sharing program.

11 Sec. 03.12.030. DEVELOPMENT PLAN. (a) In order to receive
12 cost-sharing money from the department for the purpose of clearing and
13 breaking eligible land the owner of land or, if the agricultural rights
14 are held by a person other than the owner, the holder of agricultural
15 rights to the land must submit a development plan for approval by the
16 department.

17 (b) In preparing a development plan the owner of the eligible
18 land or the holder of agricultural rights to the land must obtain
19 technical services and consultation from the Agricultural Stabilization
20 and Conservation Service of the United States Department of Agriculture.

21 Sec. 03.12.040. LIMITATION ON COST-SHARING MONEY. The department
22 may pay a person with an approved development plan cost-sharing money
23 subject to the following limitations:

24 (1) 75 percent of the cost of clearing land up to a maximum
25 of \$200 per acre or 75 percent of the cost of breaking up land to a
26 maximum of \$100 per acre;

27 (2) \$7,500 per farm in one calendar year; and

28 (3) \$30,000 per farm.

29 Sec. 03.12.050. REPAYMENT OF COST-SHARING MONEY. (a) If eligible

1 land is not put into production as crop or pasture land within three
2 years after cost-sharing money is paid to the owner of the land or to
3 the holder of the agricultural rights to the land, the cost-sharing
4 money shall be repaid to the department by the recipient of the money.

5 (b) If eligible land does not remain in production as crop or
6 pasture land for at least seven consecutive years after the owner of
7 the land or the holder of the agricultural rights to the land receives
8 cost-sharing money from the department, the cost-sharing money shall be
9 repaid to the department by the recipient of the money.

10 Sec. 03.12.060. DEFINITION. In this chapter, "department" means
11 the Department of Natural Resources.

12 * Sec. 2. AS 03.12 is repealed on June 30, 1986.

13 * Sec. 3. This Act takes effect July 1, 1981.

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DRAFT

A PROPOSED STATE-FEDERAL SMALL FARM PROJECT

STATE: State of Alaska

SCOPE: Statewide

PROJECT TITLE: Improvement of Alaska's Small Farms

1. Project Description and Objectives:

This project is proposed as a joint State-Federal assistance project with the State of Alaska providing the cost-share money and the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service (ASCS-USDA) administering the project through its county offices and county committee system.

Objectives of the project are: (1) To make possible the development of Alaska's small farms into more viable economic size units through a cost-share program enabling farmers to clear and develop more cropland thereby increasing individual farm income; (2) To exercise influence over the kind of land that is cleared and to provide guidance and technical assistance on the method of removing the existing vegetation; (3) To encourage, preserve and strengthen the small farms of Alaska as a continuing viable component of Alaska agriculture and the economy of the State.

Through an already existing cooperative agreement, technical services will be provided by the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) through ASCS. Cost-share limitation will be \$7,500 per farm per year with a maximum total assistance limitation of \$30,000 per farm under the project. The \$7,500 limitation will allow more acres to be developed at one time and thus lower the cost per acre. Other necessary conservation practices will be funded through ASCS under the regular Agricultural Conservation Program (ACP).

A goal of the project is to assist 100 small farmers per year. Initially the project is proposed to run five (5) years. An annual allocation of \$800,000 for cost-sharing is requested from the State, of which 5 percent will be transferred by ASCS to SCS for technical services performed. Maximum cost-share rate under the project will be 75 percent of the actual cost of clearing not to exceed \$200 per acre and 75 percent of the actual cost of breaking not to exceed \$100 per acre.

2. Number of Farmers, Economic Situation, Etc.:

It is estimated there are now 300-400 small farms in Alaska which are economically underdeveloped and unprofitable largely because farmers have lacked the necessary capital required to clear and develop sufficient acres to allow the application of best management practices and realize economies of scale in the production of crops and livestock. Because of this situation, most small farmers in Alaska are forced into a subsistence type of operation with little prospect of organizing and developing their farms into profitable economic units.

The State of Alaska has transferred and will continue to transfer more agricultural land into private ownership. The boroughs also are disposing of agricultural land. Purchasers of this land receive only the agricultural interest rights to the land and must, in some instances, submit and follow specific approved development plans.

Without assistance in clearing and developing this agricultural land, a critical situation develops wherein the small farm landowners find themselves unable to meet development schedules. The seller is then faced with the alternatives of either taking back the land or excusing or ignoring the development plans which were required as a part of the purchase contract. Even where development plans are not required, without assistance development will likely be sporadic and insignificant.

This much needed land use adjustment will be accomplished under this project in the interest of soil and water conservation and in keeping with the capabilities of the land. Only those lands with soil capability classification II and III will be eligible for cost-sharing under this project. This is in harmony with the current State land classification policy wherein only land with capability class II and III soils are classified as agricultural land.

Through the exercise of control over the kind of land that is developed and the clearing method used, it will be possible to minimize the erosion hazards which could cost millions of dollars to correct in the future.

3. USDA Involvement:

ASCS through its county committee system will administer the project and will provide the cost-share money for the correction and control of other conservation problems. SCS will provide technical assistance in carrying out the clearing and breaking practice.

4. State Involvement:

The State of Alaska will provide \$800,000 per year cost-share money for the clearing and breaking practice under the project.

5. Completion Date: 1986

ENHANCEMENT OF SMALL FAMILY FARM LAND RESOURCES

- A Purpose. To achieve needed land use adjustments and improvements in the interest of soil and water conservation and in keeping with the capabilities of the land and thus to encourage, preserve and strengthen the small farm as a continuing component of Alaska agriculture.
- B Applicability. To lands with soil capability classification II and III.
- C Policies.
- 1 Cost-sharing may be authorized for removal of existing vegetation by mechanical means.
 - 2 Land under this practice must be devoted to crop or pasture within three (3) years following the program year in which the practice is started.
 - 3 Burning will be permitted only in the areas where allowed by applicable State and/or borough regulations.
 - 4 Necessary conservation measures must have been applied to all other land under the applicant's control in order for him/her to qualify for this practice.
 - 5 Under this practice, this acreage must remain in agricultural production for a minimum of seven years following completion of the practice or cost-shares must be repaid.
 - 6 Land having timber with commercial value is not applicable to this practice until such timber is utilized.
 - 7 This practice is not applicable on land using State homestead credits for clearing or State agricultural projects with long term land clearing loans.
- D Specifications. This practice shall be performed in accordance with SCS standards and specifications.
- E Technical Responsibility. Assigned to CS.
- F Maximum Cost-Share Rates. 75 percent of actual cost not to exceed \$200 per acre for clearing and \$100 per acre for breaking.



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Agricultural
Stabilization and
Conservation Service

Alaska State ASCS Office
2221 E. Northern Lights Blvd. Suite 201
Anchorage, Alaska 99504

October 9, 1980

Honorable H. "Pappy" Moss
Alaska House of Representatives
P.O. Box 182
Delta Junction, Alaska 99737

Dear Pappy:

You will recall that ASCS Administrator Ray Fitzgerald and I visited with you over lunch at the Delta Field Day in August regarding a possible proposal to initiate a land clearing practice similar to the one we had for a number of years prior to 1980. Existing legislation for ACP does not permit the inclusion of production oriented practices. They say we are bringing new land into production and therefore, will not allow ACP funds to be used in cost-sharing on the practice. ACP funds can only be used for conservation practices.

Ray Fitzgerald had just come from our State ASCS Conference which we held in Fairbanks prior to the field day. At the conference, I suggested asking the State of Alaska to provide the cost-share money for the land clearing practice and ASCS would administer the practice, as we did in the past, through our existing county offices and county committee system. This would give assistance to Alaska's small farmers and the State would save money by not having to set up a duplicate administrative system. Besides, it would hold down the expansion and cost of State government.

Mr. Fitzgerald thought this was a good idea and at Delta, you will recall, asked us to pull together a joint State-Federal proposal and indicated it would probably receive favorable approval on the national level. I am enclosing a copy of this proposal for your perusal. Please look it over and give us your comments and suggestions. Any help you can give will be appreciated. While it is tentatively written with the State providing the cost-share money, this arrangement could be changed if ASCS would see fit to share the funding, however this does not appear very likely.

I feel it would be a waste of time and effort to try to get the practice reinstated under the regular ACP as it was before being disallowed. I have enclosed some background material which will give you an idea of some of the dialogue we have had on the practice. We battled national for three years but to no avail. They finally said "no more" and disallowed the clearing practice for 1980. Even if they were somehow persuaded to again allow the practice under ACP, our State allocation is pitifully small and must be used for existing high priority conservation and pollution abatement problems.

Most Federal and State agencies heartily endorse the concept of this proposal; i.e., need for it, etc., and I am enclosing a few letters that have come in on it so far. Of course, our county ASC committees and State ASC Committee and all farmers are strongly for it. This project, if funded, would probably do more to assist the small farmers in Alaska than anything else we could do for them. }

Again, we appreciate your interest in and strong support for agriculture. Do not hesitate to call me on this or anything else at any time. Good luck on election day.

Sincerely yours,



CHARLES F. MARSH
State Executive Director

Enclosures

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

Memorandum

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service

TO : Chairperson, Alaska State ASC Committee

Date: APR 11 1980

In Reply Refer to:

FROM : Director, Conservation and Environmental Protection Division

SUBJECT: Request for Proposed Special Practice for Fiscal Year 1980 -
Conserving and Protecting Rural Land Resources - Your Memorandum
of January 17

We have carefully reviewed the provisions of the above proposed special practice. You indicate in the documentation submitted with the request that new lands would be brought into production and at present, no conservation problem exists, only a potential one. There are no provisions under the ACP which would allow cost-sharing for such items. It is for these reasons that the proposed special practice of conserving and protecting rural land resources is not approved for cost-sharing under the ACP.

Alan Durick

RECEIVED

APR 14 1980

ALASKA STATE
ASCS OFFICE

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

Memorandum

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
 Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service
 Alaska State ASCS Office

TO : CEPD thru Northwest Area

Date: June 20, 1980

FROM : *Charles F. Marsh*
 State Executive Director

In Reply Refer to:

SUBJECT : Disapproval of Special ACP Practices

The Alaska State ASC Committee appeals the decision of CEPD to disapprove Alaska's Special ACP Practices, SP14 - Conserving and Protecting Rural Land Resources (for 1980) and SP15 - Removal of Berm Rows and Berm Piles (for 1979 and 1980).

Alaska's farmer elected county committeemen in all counties of Alaska, without exception, are unanimous in their request for these special practices and emphasize the statewide need for them. The STC recognizes the fact that these committeemen know their respective counties best - with their particular micro climate, soils, etc.

The STC feels quite strongly that Alaska is indeed unique and has special problems; unlike those encountered elsewhere in the United States. Unless these special problems are understood, and dealt with, an injustice may be done to Alaska's farmers and soil erosion problems may be allowed to develop which could cost millions of dollars in remedial measures to correct in the future. We would appear very shortsighted not to take these factors into consideration.

The STC acknowledges the fact that new land is coming into production. But rather than contributing to it, these practices assist in screening out land unsuitable for development and provide participating farmers with the necessary technical knowledge for developing the best soils so that erosion does not occur now or in the future. The STC feels that USDA has a responsibility through ASCS and SCS to give technical information and assistance to Alaska's landowners which will provide them with alternatives for developing the agricultural land. Unless some control is exercised over the kind of land in Alaska that is developed and the way it is brought into agricultural production, serious erosion hazards may be created. This should be avoided if possible.

The State Committee also wishes to call attention to Special Practice SP16a - Conserving and Improving Native Grass Land, which was disapproved for Homer County for 1980. Again the STC feels that a closer look should be taken in an effort to understand the conservation problem involved. While it can be argued that it is production oriented, the Committee points out that the purpose for carrying out soil conservation measures is to maintain the productive capacity of our soils. Every conservation practice affects production directly or indirectly. Exactly where do we draw the line?

The STC requests more dialogue with Area and CEPD officials regarding these special practices hoping that a better understanding of Alaska's conservation needs may result and that our farmers may reap the greatest benefits in the long run. We are again enclosing a copy of a letter received in January, 1979 from W. E. Long, State Conservationist in Alaska, giving SCS's justification and support of two of these special practices. The STC hereby urges reconsideration and reinstatement of these special practices.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE

2221 East Northern Lights Blvd., Suite 129, Anchorage, Alaska 99504

January 31, 1979

Charles Marsh
State Executive Director
Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service
Anchorage, Alaska

Dear Mr. Marsh:

Re: ACP Special Practices in Alaska

The ACP practices, Conserving and Protecting Rural Land Resources, and Removal of Berm Rows and Berm piles, are two practices that are designed to specifically meet the conservation needs of Alaskan farms. Through the use of these practices, the best agricultural soils are developed and permit land management that will avoid the erosion problems that are so prevalent in other areas of the United States.

In the early years of farmland development in Alaska, many acres were cleared and partially developed only to find that the soil was not suitable for agricultural use. This created an economic burden on the landowners and also unnecessarily disturbed the environment.

Unplanned land clearing can create erosion hazards. These include wind erosion, water erosion, and hazards due to thawing of permafrost soils with high ice content. Although there is no absolute way of fully predicting the permafrost hazards, soil surveys and SCS staff experience under previous ACP work has generally provided guidelines that minimize the hazard.

The permafrost problem is exemplified by one field cleared by a homesteader near Fairbanks without technical assistance. He produced three annual crops of barley before the field became too rough to farm. The roughness was from thawing ice lenses which resulted in severe soil subsidence. Today, there are several small lakes in that abandoned field.

On sloping land the method of clearing and stacking the clearing residues is important to minimizing erosion hazards. It is often necessary to use the clearing residues as temporary conservation diversions, dams, etc. These are used until a field is developed to the extent that adequate agronomic or other conservation practices can be installed to stabilize the field. In other areas care must be taken to prevent the interception of water by berm pile causing the concentration of flow, resulting in gully erosion.



Mr. Charles Marsh
January 31, 1979

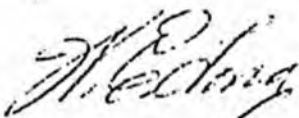
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ACP land development procedures (Conserving and Protecting Rural Land Resources) have been important to assure sound development of Alaska agricultural soils. The effects of the two practices can be summarized as providing for:

1. The development of only soils that have adequate agricultural potentials.
2. The development of soil resources in an environmentally sound manner that minimizes erosion hazards, arctic and subarctic development hazards, and undue overall environmental hazards. In most of Alaska, land clearing must be accomplished in the winter months or when the ground is frozen, to prevent the loss of topsoil during the process. It is very important that proper methods be used, and, inspection provided for through ACP assures development with minimum environmental degradation.
3. These ACP practices have had an important effect of getting technical assistance to a land owner before any development occurs, and in effect, providing the opportunity to "do it right" as the farms are developed.
4. In Alaska it has been graphically demonstrated that agricultural soils, properly developed, have greatly enhanced wildlife values for both moose and migrating waterfowl.

It should be noted that the 1978 Soil and Water Resources Conservation Act (RCA) public hearings listed soil erosion as a low concern in Alaska. It is suggested the reason for this is that conservation agencies have been very instrumental in providing guidance to farm development before the actual development starts. As the ACP practice, Developing Rural Land Resources, has been Alaska's number one cost share practice, we suggest that this has been the major factor for sound overall development of farmland in Alaska.

All county committees in the state require that a complete conservation plan be developed with the local soil conservation subdistrict before any cost share can be given. As a result, virtually all cooperating ACP farms have a conservation plan, and again, these plans were prepared before any land development occurred -- setting the stage for technically sound guided development.



W. E. Long
State Conservationist

June 16, 1980

The Honorable Bob Bergland
Secretary
Department of Agriculture
14th Street and Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Bergland:

I am writing to urge the reinstatement by the U.S. Department of Agriculture of Agricultural Conservation Program (ACP) practices of land development that are uniquely suited to Alaska.

In the past, two practices, "Conserving and Protecting Rural Resources" and "Removal of Berm Rows and Berm Piles," have been included in the ACP cost-share program for Alaskan farmers. It is my understanding that while the FY 81 appropriation to the ASCS program in Alaska has not been cut, these two practices have now been declared inconsistent with Department of Agriculture policy because they are production rather than conservation oriented.

While it is true that some Alaskan farmers are putting new lands into production, many agricultural officials in the State maintain that the ACP cost-sharing program has been a major factor in the prudent development of farmland in our state. The value of the ACP program is that it provides the farmer with necessary technical assistance before any development occurs, thereby insuring sound development of soils that have adequate agricultural potential. This is particularly important in the fragile arctic and sub-arctic conditions where erosion and destruction of topsoil can be easily accomplished. In most of Alaska, land clearing must be performed when the ground is frozen to prevent loss or permanent damage to the topsoil.

The use of berm rows and other clearing residues have an important impact in Alaska. These practices minimize erosion and improve drainage. Further, by improving the quality of agricultural soils, they have greatly enhanced wildlife values for some big game and migrating waterfowl.

The Honorable Bob Bergland
June 16, 1980
Page 2

Federal agricultural programs designed for fully developed farm areas often exclude the emerging Alaskan farmer. One notable exception has been the ACP cost-share program in Alaska, which promotes the philosophy that a relatively small amount of money spent now on prevention will multiply in value as more agricultural land is developed in Alaska. It will be far more costly in the future to remedy present day mistakes, if they can be repaired at all.

It is my belief that the two practices of land clearing done in Alaska do comply with the intent of ASCS policy in that they have great long-range conservation and pollution abatement effects, despite the fact that they are being instituted on new farmland. I hope you will give full consideration to reinstating these practices.

Sincerely yours,

Terry Miller
Lieutenant Governor

cc: The Honorable Ted Stevens
The Honorable Mike Gravel
The Honorable Don Young

bcc: Mr. Bob Palmer, Special Projects
Mr. Nick Carney
Mr. Charles Marsh
Mr. Bob Pollock
Mr. James Fisher

STATE OF ALASKA

JAY S. HAMMOND, Governor

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE

P.O. BOX 1088
PALMER, ALASKA 99645
PHONE: (907) 745-3236

October 7, 1980

TO: Alaska State ASCS Office
2221 E. Northern Lights - Suite 201
Anchorage, Alaska 99504

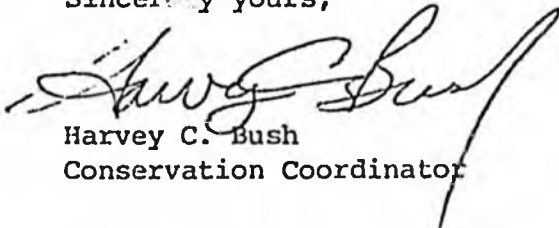
FROM: Alaska Soil Conservation District

At their meeting of October 3, 1980 the Alaska Soil Conservation District Board of Directors reviewed the proposed State-Federal Small Farm Project which was submitted by your office. After discussing this proposal the Board issued the following statement:

The Alaska Soil Conservation District Board of Directors endorses the concept of a State funded land clearing cost-sharing program.

If we can be of any further assistance, please feel free to contact us at the Division of Agriculture.

Sincerely yours,



Harvey C. Bush
Conservation Coordinator

paw

RECEIVED

OCT 8 1980

ALASKA STATE
ASCS OFFICE



DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

2221 E. Northern Lights Blvd., Suite 126
Anchorage, Alaska 99504

October 7, 1980

Administrator Ray Fitzgerald
Agricultural Stabilization & Conservation Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Washington, D.C. 20250

Re: Proposed State/Federal Project to lend ASCS structure to Alaska for cost share program.

The proposed project for improvement of Alaska's small farms by a State-Federal Project which would lend the Agricultural Stabilization & Conservation Service (ASCS) structure and network to the state for distribution of state provided incentive payments, appears to be the very type of activity desirable to help Alaska move towards agricultural self-sufficiency.

It would seem the project would encourage and enhance conservation practices in a way, and in a sector of activity, in the state of Alaska which ordinarily might not be exposed to such conservation emphasis. The experience of ASCS should permit administration without immediate addition of state employment. However, the experience itself would provide a reservoir of knowledge for future activities and assist state renewable resource development.

The idea of encouraging careful and appropriate clearing practices seems essential since such activity will go on regardless of Federal policy disapproval. As a matter of fact, the state's land disposal policy, in some instances, almost mandates clearing. Therefore, it is highly desirable the appropriate conservation practices be encouraged, with a cooperative commitment of the farmers entering on newly opened Alaska land.

The emphasis on 100 small farmers per year would seem to dovetail with the land disposal sales made by the Alaska Department of Natural Resources. The proposed clearing rates per acre appear realistic enough to lend reasonable thrust to conservation practices. The limitation would also be more valuable to the small farmers which would match USDA initiatives to help that sector of agriculture.

I would enthusiastically endorse and encourage this program in any way possible.

James E. Fisher
James E. Fisher
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Representative

cc: Office of Intergovernmental Affairs

Encl.



COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE

UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA
FAIRBANKS ALASKA 99701

2651 Providence Avenue
Anchorage, Alaska 99504
Phone: (907)263-1866

September 25, 1980

Charles F. Marsh
State Executive Director
ASCS
2221 E. Northern Lights Blvd.
Suite 125
Anchorage, AK 99504

Dear Charlie:

I appreciated the opportunity to renew the proposal for "A Proposed State-Federal Small Farm Project." The objectives in the proposal are well stated. The proposal's objectives fit well the objectives that the Cooperative Extension Service has for Alaska's small farmers. I certainly hope that the proposal is funded. Our CES staff work with all of the farmers that will be involved and we will give full support through our programs to this project.

Sincerely,

Peter M. Probasco
Associate Director

baf

CC Dr. James W. Matthews
Al Epps