

Clean Water Act aimed at improving land management

Authorized by the Clean Water Act of 1977, Public Law 95-217, which was signed by President Carter on December 28, 1977. P.L. 95-217 amends the Federal Water Pollution Control Act Amendments of 1972, P.L. 92-500—providing additional responsibilities and authorities to improve the quality of the Nation's waters.

Legislative History

During June 1977 the Senate Committee on Environmental and Public Works held field hearings on amendments to P.L. 92-500. Farm and environmental organizations, soil conservation districts, State conservation agencies, and "208" planning agencies testified on the need for Federal assistance to control non-point source pollution.

During later consideration of the Clean Water Act, Senator John C. Culver of Iowa introduced an amendment to Section 208 of 92-500, entitled "Agricultural Cost Sharing", also called the "Rural Clean Water Program".

Authority

Section 208 directs "the Secretary of Agriculture, with the concurrence of the Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency, and acting through the Soil Conservation Service and such other agencies of the Department of Agriculture as the Secretary may designate...to establish and administer a program to enter into contracts of not less than five years nor more than ten years with owners and operators having control of rural land for the purpose of installing and maintaining measures incorporating best management practices to control non-point source pollution for improved water quality..."

P.S. 95-217 authorizes \$200 million for fiscal year 1979 and \$400 million for fiscal year 1980 to be appropriated for carrying out the program.

Actions

To provide technical and financial help in rural areas that are implementing EPA-approved water quality management plans under Section 208 of P.S. 92-500, USDA will take these steps:

1. Assist in developing plans, approved by local soil conservation districts, with land owners and operators for their farms, ranches, or other lands.
2. Help land owners and operators carry out the plans by providing technical assistance and by sharing the cost of planned measures to improve water quality. (Cost shar-

ing is limited to 50 per cent except in special cases determined by the Secretary.)

3. Give priority to areas and sources that have the most significant effect

upon water quality and, together with local soil conservation districts, determine the priority of as-

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sistance among individual land owners and operators to assure that the most critical water quality problems are addressed.

4. Enter into agreements with soil conservation districts, State soil and water conservation agencies, or State water quality agencies to administer all or part of the program.

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