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Rural Areas Prosper Through ●●●

# SMALL WATERSHED PROGRAM



Minn. 1667

Wherever you live -- in the country, suburb, or urban area -- you live in a watershed, an area of land where runoff water from rain and melted snow drains into a common outlet such as a stream, creek, river or lake. The watershed can be as small as a few acres or as gigantic as the Mississippi River Basin.

The well defined -- and well protected -- watershed pictured above covers several hundred acres. Strip-cropping and contour farming measures on the sloping land keep the rain from running off too fast, allowing it to soak in. The excess water finds its way -- slowly -- down grassed waterways taking very little of the valuable soil with it. The chance of flooding on the bottom land is greatly reduced. Therefore damage to private and public property is lessened. But not all small watersheds are so well protected. In fact, of the 13,000 small watersheds in the United States more than 8,000 need protecting.

The protection of our land from floodwater and erosion damage is so vitally important nationally that in 1954 Congress passed a bill, Public Law 566, which enables local groups to obtain technical and financial aid from the Federal government in planning and developing watersheds under 250,000 acres in size. The Act, popularly known as the Small Watershed Program, has already helped many communities gain the needed protection.

Through a watershed project, conservation measures are established on the land, flood prevention dams are built, and channel improvements made where needed. The dams are designed to catch and hold peak runoff water and discharge it at a reduced rate down the streams and creeks.

In many cases these dams are designed for multiple use. The permanent pool of water backed up by the structure can be an important source of water for industrial, domestic, and irrigation use. Most of the multi-purpose reservoirs provide ideal recreational facilities for swimming, fishing, boating and wildlife habitats.

Where these multi-purpose watershed projects have been established, the results have been extremely gratifying. It has meant less risk in farming, a lower road and bridge maintenance cost, the addition of small industry, and a general uplift in the economic conditions of the area.

The Small Watershed Program is administered by the Soil Conservation Service. Local groups with authority to sponsor a project include soil conservation and water conservancy districts, municipalities, counties, and irrigation and drainage districts. The project must be approved by the State, and benefits must be greater than costs on all structural measures.

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, Soil Conservation Service    Picture Story No. 138    April 1962

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# EVERYONE SUFFERS DURING FLOODS



Tons of valuable soil have been washed from the pasture at the left leaving a meandering gully which has isolated a portion of the land from both machinery and livestock. SD 517



A stream swollen with an excess of runoff water undercut this section of a highway causing it to collapse. Floods also damage bridges and wash out country roads. CONN 10249



Soil from eroding farmland filled up this Texas lake which, at one time, was more than 35 feet deep. Proper land treatment would have prevented this siltation. TEX 48-840B



Floods cause millions of dollars damage annually to both private and public properties. The chance of floods like this could be greatly reduced if measures were taken to control the rain where it falls. W VA 873

# WATERSHED PROGRAM AIDS EVERYONE



Flood prevention and multi-purpose dams in protected watersheds have a variety of uses. They not only provide protection from flood and erosion, but they can also be developed to store a water supply for nearby communities or for irrigation. These small lakes also make excellent recreational facilities for swimming, fishing, boating and picnicking. MINN 1731, CAL 7196



Fish and wildlife have a better chance of surviving and propagating in streams, rivers and lakes that are free of silt. MINN 1714



With flood hazards reduced and assurance of ample water supply, many rural communities have been able to attract small industries. VA-W-42

## HOW ARE WATERSHEDS PLANNED?



Authorized local organizations sponsor the watershed project, acquire land, easements, and rights-of-way; let contracts; obtain financing for the local share of the cost, and operate and maintain the structures and other improvements after the project is completed. 76965



Detailed field studies are made by the Soil Conservation Service and other agencies to determine the costs and benefits of the proposed project. From these and other studies a work plan is prepared and submitted for State and Federal approval. ORE 60041



When the project meets all requirements and is approved by the State and Federal Government, construction can begin. The Federal Government pays all the construction costs of installing works of improvement applicable to flood prevention. The local

sponsoring groups share the cost of installing works of improvement for other purposes. Long term loans are available from the Farmers Home Administration to help local organizations in meeting their share of the construction costs. LA 62547