

**CONSERVATIONISTS UPSET** 9/28/94

# Soil erosion programs take severe cuts

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**Washington, D.C. —** When President Clinton's budget came out in January with massive cuts proposed for soil erosion programs, many conservationists shrugged it off as just another presidential offering that would be "dead on arrival" in Congress.

It wasn't.

Congress has shocked the conservation movement by ratifying Clinton's plan to cut funding for the Agriculture Department's venerable Soil Conservation Service almost in half — from \$1.235 billion currently to \$697.6 million in the next fiscal year.

SCS Chief Paul Johnson, a Decorah, Ia., farmer, agrees that his programs "took a pretty heavy hit."

Johnson said the agency saw "hard times" coming and offered an employee buyout this year, which cut personnel by about 1,000 to 13,000.

"We wish we were on a rising tide," said Johnson. "There's an awful lot of work to do on the land. Everywhere I go I see the fantastic