

Hello,

I want to share some information that is relevant to the historical context for the inclusion of soil health in the name of the conservation districts.

In 1929, a Columbia University professor by the name of J. Russel Smith wrote a book entitled 'Tree Crops,' in which he lamented the dangers of soil erosion and the potential for trees to mitigate them. In it he writes "Forest - field - plow - desert that is the cycles of the hills under most plow agriculture...Indeed we Americans, though new upon our land are destroying soil by field wash faster than any people that ever lived...A burned city can be rebuilt. A field that is washed away is gone for ages." Smith travelled widely across the world and noticed that regions in the world that incorporated trees, such as the chestnut forests of Corsica, France, maintained stable soils, regenerative agriculture and human culture with it, as compared to regions with plow agriculture.

In the 1930's, the dust bowl began and in 1933 Franklin Delano Roosevelt became president. FDR's secretary of Agriculture was Henry Wallace, who was a fan of J. Russell Smith's work, inviting him to introduce his concepts into the New Deal, creating a 'Tree Crops' division of the CCC. FDR became a big proponent of the work, and in 1937, wrote a letter to all of the state governors, writing, "The dust storms and floods of the last few years have underscored the importance of programs to control soil erosion. I need not emphasize to you the seriousness of the problem and the desirability of our taking effective action, as a Nation and in the several States, to conserve the soil as our basic asset. The Nation that destroys its soil destroys itself." In the letter FDR asks that the states establish regional soil conservation districts, the lineage of the Conservation Districts in mention in this bill.

Thank you,

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