



DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20250

RUSH

Advance Copy
Hearing Sch. 3/6/8

Honorable James H. Scheuer
Chairman, Subcommittee on
Natural Resources, Agriculture,
Research and Environment of the
Committee on Science and Technology,
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

To: *Randy Coleman*
Rm. 7230
Phone # 395-4606

Dear Mr. Chairman:

This is in reply to your request of February 13, 1984, for a report on H.R. 4836, "To establish a system to promote the use of land remote-sensing satellite data, and for other purposes."

This Department has no objection to the enactment of the bill, provided that sections 501, 502(b), and 502(c) are amended to make it clear that the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration are directed to undertake only research and development activities with respect to land remote-sensing and that section 603 be clarified to permit Federal agencies to reproduce and exchange data without restrictions and without additional payment to the system operator.

The bill provides guidance to the United States Government in promoting commercialization of land remote-sensing from space with a framework for the gradual transition of civil land remote-sensing satellites from the Federal sector to private ownership and operation. Key provisions of the bill enable the Secretary of Commerce to contract with a private sector party to operate the existing United States civil land remote-sensing system and to contract with a private sector party for data from land remote-sensing systems that are established as successors to the existing government-operated system. The bill authorizes the Secretary of Commerce to license qualified private sector parties to operate civil remote-sensing space systems and provides for the regulation of such systems. The bill provides for a comprehensive program of research and development of remote-sensing from space and contains general provisions for dissemination and archiving of remote-sensing data and for ensuring that national security concerns and international commitments of the United States are met. The bill prohibits commercialization of meteorological satellites at this time.

This Department endorses those provisions of the bill that guarantee non-discriminatory access to remote-sensing data and supports the concept implicitly established in the bill that commercial systems will not be subsidized by governmental users of data.

Title V of the bill is concerned with research and development and we believe it is important that it be limited to that subject. We therefore recommend that references in sections 501, 502(b), and 502(c) to "research and monitoring" or "research, technology, and monitoring" be amended to read "research and development of technology to monitor."

Honorable James H. Scheuer

2

Section 603 specifies that the operator of a land remote-sensing system may sell data under the condition that such data will not be reproduced and disseminated by the purchaser. It is necessary that Federal agencies be permitted to reproduce digital remote-sensing data for internal use so that data will be available in the event that original files or computer tapes are inadvertently destroyed or erased. It is also highly desirable that Federal agencies within a single department be permitted to exchange remote-sensing data freely and without restriction or additional cost in order to achieve maximum efficiency in research and operational programs. We therefore recommend that section 603 be amended to include the following sentence: Federal agencies may reproduce digital remote-sensing data for internal use and may transfer remote-sensing data without restriction or additional cost within the Federal department of purchase.

The Office of Management and Budget advises that there is no objection to the presentation of this report from the standpoint of the Administration's programs.

Sincerely,