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Type	Poster or oral presentation
Category	Benefits of Stream Restoration
Title	<i>From the Benefits of Stream Modification to the Benefits of Stream Restoration: 75 Years of NRCS Water Management Practices</i>
Abstract	<p>In 2010, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will celebrate its 75th anniversary. For much of its history, the NRCS and its predecessor agency the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) have been major sponsors of stream channel modification projects. Through its Agricultural Conservation Program and Small Watershed Projects, SCS/NRCS was instrumental in straightening, deepening, widening, and clearing the banks of thousands of miles of natural streams in United States. These projects were justified by a calculation that privileged the benefits of flood protection and agricultural drainage over the costs of diminished ecological services. This began to change, however, by the early 1970s as environmental groups led by the Natural Resources Defense Council challenged the sustainability of SCS/NRCS's stream modification policies. Such challenges, along with emerging research in stream ecology and hydrology, caused SCS/NRCS to reevaluate its methods for assessing the benefits and costs of stream modification projects. Ultimately, this process led to a moratorium on channelization projects and the adoption of policies promoting stream restoration and preservation. This paper will examine this shift in policy in terms of changing environmental values over the last seventy-five years. It argues that changes in environmental values linked to broader recognition of the benefits of ecological goods and services in the 1960s and 1970s caused SCS/NRCS to reassess its methods for calculating the benefits and costs for stream modification projects leading to different policy outcomes.</p>