

Clean Water Farm Bill Letter

April XX, 2018

Dear Members of Congress:

The undersigned organizations, representing millions of people across the country who care about clean water, write to urge you to protect our nation's water supplies through robust and effective support for conservation programs and policies as you are writing the 2018 Farm Bill. The next Farm Bill should further efforts to reduce the threat nutrient pollution poses to clean water and ensure farmers and ranchers have the tools they need to be leading stewards of our shared water resources.

Conservation practices can go a long way toward protecting our water sources, and Farm Bill conservation programs offer an opportunity to give producers the financial and technical assistance needed to put those practices in place. Cover crops, conservation tillage practices, buffer strips, manure and livestock management, wetland restoration, and conservation crop rotations are just a few examples of water-friendly practices that help protect water at the source, usually at a lower cost than that incurred by downstream communities, water utilities, and rate payers to clean polluted water. That is why it is crucial to write a strong Farm Bill for conservation.

We ask that as you consider the next Farm Bill, you support the following priorities for a water-friendly 2018 Farm Bill:

FUNDING: Increase funding for the conservation title to support critical working lands, partnership, and easement programs that help to reduce nutrient pollution, protect source water, and protect water quality and availability.

CONSERVATION COMPLIANCE: Protect the linkage between basic conservation requirements and crop insurance and ensure that Sodsaver and Swampbuster provisions stay in place to keep soil out of our waterways and protect wetlands that provide critical water storage and filtration functions.

ACCESS: Increase access, through funding, technical assistance, and outreach, to Farm Bill conservation and related programs that put conservation tools in the hands of the people and communities who need them most.

TARGETING: Encourage greater targeting of funds towards areas that need it the most and towards conservation practices that are most effective at protecting drinking water sources and water quality in the places where it is most threatened.

CONSERVATION OUTCOMES: Improve measurement, reporting, and evaluation of conservation program outcomes to provide data on the impact of conservation programs and practices on water quality outcomes.

CROP INSURANCE AND WATER QUALITY: Create incentives for, and eliminate barriers to, water-friendly agricultural practices within the Federal Crop Insurance Program.

The next Farm Bill must invest in clean water by ensuring that farmers and ranchers have the tools they need to be conservation leaders and protect our nation's shared water resources. To do so, we believe the next Farm Bill must reflect these shared principles and invest in clean water.

Additionally, we urge you to reject any attempts to add anti-environmental provisions to the Farm Bill, as it must not serve as a vehicle for changes that run counter to the goal of protecting and enhancing our shared water resources.

Thank you,