

August 28, 2018

The Honorable Michael Conaway
Chairman
House Committee on Agriculture
1301 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Pat Roberts
Chairman
Senate Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Committee
328A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Collin Peterson
Ranking Member
House Committee on Agriculture
1305 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
Ranking Member
Senate Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Committee
328A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairmen Conaway and Roberts and Ranking Members Peterson and Stabenow,

To help address the challenges facing the nation's drinking water supplies, we urge the Conference Committee to fully fund the conservation title of the farm bill and to support the following conservation title reforms:

- Section 2503 of H.R. 2, which authorizes the Secretary to provide higher payment rates for conservation practices that protect source water and stipulates that no less than 10 percent of funds from all programs in the title (except the Conservation Reserve Program) be targeted at source water protection.
- Section 2503(e) of S.Amdt. to H.R. 2, which directs the Secretary to work collaboratively with stakeholders to identify priority areas for protecting sources of drinking water and provide payment rates under the Environmental Quality Incentives Program and Conservation Stewardship Program to encourage greater adoption of source water protection practices.
- Section 2303(3)(“9”) of S.Amdt. to H.R. 2, which gives states the discretion to increase cost-sharing for ten EQIP practices that most effectively address excess nutrients and other environmental priorities.
- Section 2303(3)(“7)(8) of S.Amdt. to H.R. 2, which requires the Secretary to evaluate within one year existing conservation practices and whether EQIP cost-share rates are encouraging the implementation of the most effective practices to address natural resource concerns.
- Section 2302(b) of H.R. 2, which eliminates the requirement that 60 percent of EQIP funds be spent on livestock, thereby providing states the discretion to more freely allocate EQIP funds based on environmental need, as recommended by the U.S. Government Accountability Office.
- Section 2101(3)(“C)(5) of S.Amdt. to H.R. 2, which reserves 40 percent of the acres enrolled through the continuous CRP sign-up for practices that will protect water quality in watersheds where lakes, rivers and streams are impacted sediment and nutrients or by harmful algae blooms.
- Section 2105 of S.Amdt. to H.R. 2, which reserves 20 percent of the acres enrolled through the continuous CRP sign-up to be enrolled through Conservation Reserve Enhancement

Program (CREP) agreements. Section 2015 also makes important reforms to how CREP agreements are administered.

- Section 2107 of S.Amdt. to H.R. 2, which provides an easement option for expiring CRP contracts in watersheds where lakes, rivers and streams are impacted sediment and nutrients or by harmful algae blooms.
- Section 2204 of S.Amdt. to H.R. 2, which increases payments in CSP for establishing cover crops, management-intensive rotational grazing and resource-conserving crop rotations.
- Section 2302(d)(“j)(1)(A)) of H.R. 2, which limits the number of priority resources concerns that can be addressed by a stewardship contract to no more than three within each area of a state.
- Section 2701(b)(2) of H.R. 2 and Section 2411(a)(2)(B) of S.Amdt. to H.R. 2, which adds source water protection to the list of eligible activities under the Regional Conservation Partnership Program, and other provisions providing USDA greater flexibility.
- Section 11107 of S.Amdt. to H.R. 2, which addresses current issues in the federal crop insurance program that deter the practice of cover cropping because of how it will impact their insurance policy.
- Section 2407, of H.R. 2 and Section 2428 of S.Amdt. to H.R. 2, which expresses the sense of Congress that the Federal Government should recognize and encourage partnerships at the watershed level between nonpoint sources and regulated point sources to advance the goals of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act and provide benefits to farmers, landowners, and the public.

In addition to supporting these important reforms, we urge the Conference Committee to reject the inclusion of poison pill riders that would threaten clean water protections or harm public health and the environment.

Respectfully submitted,

Alabama Rivers Alliance
Alliance for Nurses for Healthy Environments
Alliance for the Great Lakes
American Rivers
Baltimore Tree Trust
Bayou City Waterkeeper
Black Warrior Riverkeeper
Blue Heron Environmental Network, Inc.
Clean Up the River Environment
Clean Water Action
Clean Water Action Minnesota
Copper River Watershed Project
Earthjustice
Emerald Coastkeeper
Environmental Working Group
Fresh Energy
Freshwater Future
Friends of Accotink Creek

Friends of the Earth
Friends of the KAW
Friends of the Mississippi
Friends of the Nanticoke River
Gulf Restoration Network
Hip Hop Caucus
Illinois Council of Trout Unlimited
Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future
Kansas Riverkeeper
Kentucky Resources Council
League of Conservation Voters
Lower Ohio River Waterkeeper
Massachusetts River Alliance
Milwaukee Riverkeeper
Mississippi River Collaborative, *on behalf of:*

- Arkansas Public Policy Panel
- Gulf Restoration Network
- Iowa Environmental Council
- Kentucky Waterways Alliance
- Midwest Environmental Advocates
- Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy
- Missouri Coalition for the Environment
- Prairie Rivers Network
- Tennessee Clean Water Network

Natural Resources Defense Council
Naturaland Trust
Nature Abounds
Nine Mile Creek Conservation Council
Pennsylvania Farmers Union
Piedmont Environmental Council
Richmond Audubon Society
Save Our Saluda
Sierra Club
Soil and Water Conservation Society
Southern Maryland Audubon Society
Tennessee Citizens for Wilderness Planning
Tennessee Clean Water Network
Tennessee Environmental Council
Union of Concerned Scientists
Upper Missouri Waterkeeper
Waterkeepers Chesapeake
Yellow Dog Riverkeeper

Cc: Members of the Farm Bill Conference Committee