

May 5, 2015

The Honorable Robert Aderholt, Chairman  
House Agriculture Appropriations  
Subcommittee

The Honorable Sam Farr, Ranking Member  
House Agriculture Appropriations  
Subcommittee

The Honorable Jerry Moran, Chairman  
Senate Agriculture Appropriations  
Subcommittee

The Honorable Jeff Merkley, Ranking Member  
Senate Agriculture Appropriations  
Subcommittee

Dear Chairman Aderholt, Chairman Moran, Ranking Member Farr, and Ranking Member Merkley:

The undersigned organizations oppose re-opening the farm bill and thus urge you to protect farm bill conservation program mandatory funding as you consider agriculture appropriations legislation for fiscal year 2016.

Last year, the Agricultural Act of 2014 consolidated or eliminated nearly a dozen conservation programs and reduced mandatory funding by \$4 billion, with sequestration scheduled to cut an additional \$2 billion. The House and Senate Agriculture Committees did their part to reduce federal spending and did so voluntarily. The cuts contained in the new farm bill were real, serious, and deep. Under current law, new enrollments in conservation programs will decline by millions of acres in FY 2016; sequestration alone will cut \$260 million from mandatory conservation spending in FY 2016. Opening up the farm bill to reduce these programs even more should be off the table in the appropriations bill.

Yet, according to the Office of Management and Budget, the President's FY 2016 budget request proposes hundreds of millions of dollars in additional cuts to the farm bill Conservation Title. The President's request includes a 3 million acre cut to the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), a 30 percent reduction below the 10 million acres mandated by the 2014 Farm Bill. The budget proposes a 23 percent cut in funding for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). We strongly oppose these proposed cuts and urge you to reject them or any other cuts to conservation program funding. The President's proposal is shortsighted and would severely limit the capacity of farmers, ranchers, and foresters to conserve water, maintain their soil, and produce abundant food and fiber.

Agricultural conservation programs are the first line of defense in preparing for extreme weather events and avoiding the need for environmental regulations; and without the consistent funding provided by the Agriculture Committees in the farm bill, farmers and ranchers will not be able to implement common sense conservation practices. A growing world population will only increase pressure on private agricultural lands, and protecting the health of the soil, improving the quantity and quality of water, and providing robust wildlife habitat will be critical to the future. Each depends on voluntary, incentive-based conservation practices.

Additional cuts to farm bill conservation programs would leave producers high and dry when trying to prepare for and manage drought, flooding, and other extreme weather. It would mean more water pollution and less wildlife habitat. It would drive up long-term costs for environmental mitigation, and threaten our nation's food security.

As the Subcommittees develop FY 2016 appropriations bills, we urge you to keep the farm bill intact, to reject the Administrations' irresponsible farm bill cuts, and to protect these vital programs and the public goods they support.

Sincerely,

Alabama Association of Conservation Districts  
Alliance for Sustainable Communities  
Alliance for the Great Lakes  
Alternative Energy Resources Organization  
American Bird Conservancy  
American Farmland Trust  
American Forests  
American Rivers  
American Seed Trade Association  
American Society of Agronomy  
Association of State Floodplain Managers  
Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies  
Audubon  
Audubon Naturalist Society  
Bluestem Communications  
Brown County Chapter of the Izaak Walton League of America  
Buckeye All-State Chapter of the Izaak Walton League of America  
California Climate and Agriculture Network  
California FarmLink  
Cass County, Minnesota Chapter of the Izaak Walton League of America  
Catholic Rural Life  
Cecil Land Use Association  
Center for Family Farm Development, Inc.  
Center for Rural Affairs  
Central New York Chapter of the Izaak Walton League of America  
Certified Naturally Grown  
Chesapeake Bay Foundation  
Clean Water Action  
Community Food & Justice Coalition  
Conservation Federation of Missouri  
Conservation Pennsylvania  
CROPP Cooperative - Organic Valley  
Crop Science Society of America  
Decatur Chapter of the Izaak Walton League of America  
Defenders of Wildlife  
Dwight Lydell Chapter of the Izaak Walton League of America  
Endangered Habitats League  
Florida Wildlife Federation  
Fredericksburg-Rappahannock Chapter of the Izaak Walton League of America  
Galveston Bay Foundation  
Grassworks Inc.

Hamilton Chapter of the Izaak Walton League of America  
Headwaters Chapter of the Izaak Walton League of America  
Heart of the Lakes Center for Land Conservation Policy  
Illinois Council of Trout Unlimited  
Illinois Stewardship Alliance  
Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy  
Iowa Environmental Council  
Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation  
Izaak Walton League of America  
Kansas Association of Conservation Districts  
Kansas Rural Center  
Kansas Wildlife Federation  
Land Conservancy of New Jersey  
Land Improvement Contractors of America  
Land Stewardship Project  
Land Trust Alliance  
League of Women Voters of the U.S.  
Loken Excavation & Drainage, Inc.  
Maryland Conservation Council  
Michael Fields Agricultural Institute  
Michigan Food & Farming Systems  
Michigan Clean Water Action  
Michigan Young Farmer Coalition  
Midwest Environmental Advocates  
Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service  
Milwaukee Riverkeeper  
Minnesota Conservation Federation  
Missouri Coalition for the Environment  
Missouri Prairie Foundation  
National Association of Clean Water Agencies  
National Association of Conservation Districts  
National Association of RC&D Councils  
National Association of Water Companies  
National Center for Appropriate Technology  
National Farmers Union  
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition  
National Wildlife Federation  
National Young Farmers Coalition  
Natural Resources Defense Council  
Nebraska Sustainable Agriculture Society  
Nebraska Wildlife Federation  
New Jersey Audubon Society  
New Jersey Conservation Foundation  
New York State Division of the Izaak Walton League of America  
North Dakota Wildlife Federation  
Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance  
Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Working Group  
Northwest Center for Alternatives to Pesticides

Ohio Division of the Izaak Walton League of America  
Ohio Environmental Council  
Ohio River Foundation  
Ohio Wetlands Association  
Oregon Association of Conservation Districts  
Oregon Tilth  
PCC Farmland Trust  
Pennsylvania Council of Churches  
Pesticide Action Network  
Pheasants Forever  
Pollinator Partnership  
Practical Farmers of Iowa  
Prairie Rivers Network  
Prince William Conservation Alliance  
Quail Forever  
Rapid City Chapter of the Izaak Walton League of America  
River Alliance of Wisconsin  
Shenandoah Riverkeeper  
Sleepy Creek Watershed Association  
Slow Food USA  
Soil and Water Conservation Society  
Soil Science Society of America  
South Dakota Wildlife Federation  
St. Mary's River Watershed Association  
Tennessee Clean Water Network  
The 29-90 Sportsmen Club  
The Nature Conservancy  
The Wetlands Initiative  
The Wildlife Society  
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership  
Union of Concerned Scientists  
Upper Potomac Riverkeeper  
Virginia Association for Biological Farming  
Washington Sustainable Food & Farming Network  
Water Environment Federation  
Western Reserve Chapter of the Izaak Walton League of America  
Wild Farm Alliance  
Wildlife Mississippi  
Wisconsin Farmers Union  
Women, Food and Agriculture Network  
World Wildlife Fund  
Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation

Cc: Members of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees