



May 10, 2013

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow  
Chairman  
Agriculture Committee  
U.S. Senate  
133 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Thad Cochran  
Ranking Member  
Agriculture Committee  
U.S. Senate  
113 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairwoman Stabenow and Senator Cochran,

As you continue work to reauthorize the Farm Bill, we urge you to maintain key provisions contained in last year's Senate-approved Farm Bill package that would provide stronger tools to help agricultural producers avoid nutrient run-off and thereby help improve water quality in local watersheds.

Nutrient runoff is the greatest water quality challenge facing the United States today. According to State water quality reports, 80,000 miles of rivers and streams, 2.5 million acres of lakes, reservoirs and ponds, 78% of the assessed continental U.S. coastal areas and more than 30% of estuaries are impaired due to excessive levels of nitrogen and phosphorus (nutrients). In all, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency attributes excess nutrients as the direct or indirect cause of impairments in over 50% of impaired river and stream miles; over 50% of impaired lake acres; and nearly 60% of impaired bay and estuarine square miles. For the majority of these waters, nutrient run-off from agricultural lands is the dominant source of the nutrient impairments according to studies by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS). Over this next decade, the critical challenge facing efforts to restore and maintain clean and safe water is whether excessive amounts of nutrients in our waters can be reduced.

Last year's Senate-approved Farm Bill reauthorization included several provisions in §2401, the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCP), that offer stronger tools to help agricultural producers undertake effective nutrient management activities in critical watersheds to improve water quality. The provisions include encouraging partnerships between agricultural producers and municipal entities such as water and wastewater utilities and non-governmental organizations to help farmers manage nutrients more effectively, provide stable five-year funding for nutrient management practices, and prioritize nutrient management activities in these targeted watersheds. Collectively, these provisions provide important steps forward for conservation and water quality policy.

We have an opportunity in this next Farm Bill to establish policies to more effectively reduce agricultural nutrient run-off and improve water quality throughout the United States. We urge you to maintain key

provisions in the RCPP related to nutrient management, and enact a Farm Bill that will help meet our nation's water quality goals.

Sincerely,

American Public Works Association

Association of Clean Water Administrators

Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies

California Association of Sanitation Agencies

Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District

National Association of Clean Water Agencies

National Association of Conservation Districts

National Association of Water Companies

Southern California Alliance of Publically Owned Treatment Works

Water Environment Federation

Cc: Members, Senate Agriculture Committee