



Hundreds of Organizations Ask Congress to “Hold the Line” on Conservation Programs in the Farm Bill

WASHINGTON (June 12, 2012) – Today, more than 500 organizations, businesses and individuals signed a letter asking congressional leaders not to further cut funding to the Conservation Title of the Farm Bill. Noting that conservation programs already have been significantly cut in recent years and will bear more than their fair share of deficit reduction in the Farm Bill as currently drafted, the letter asks Congress to “hold the line” on conservation funding at the amounts provided in the bill approved by the Senate Agriculture Committee.

The 523 signatories comprise large and small organizations, businesses and landowners from all across America, collectively representing tens of millions of Americans.

The letter notes that conservation programs are essential to the sustainability of agriculture and forestry in the United States and to meeting the growing demand for food and fiber at home and abroad. These programs are “high-leverage investments in rural America,” protecting natural resources by funding a variety of voluntary partnerships and cooperative conservation efforts between the U.S. Department of Agriculture and private landowners.

“Since the 2008 farm bill was enacted, Conservation Title programs have already been cut significantly through the annual appropriations process, particularly in the last two agriculture appropriations bills, and these cuts have had real and unfortunate impacts on the ground. The additional significant cuts to conservation funding included in the bill advanced by the Senate Agriculture Committee, if enacted, mean that the Conservation Title is already contributing more than its fair share to budget deficit reduction. While policy improvements can help reduce the impact of these additional cuts, they will, nevertheless have a negative impact on the ground. Further cuts would jeopardize this country’s entire system of successful agricultural and forestry conservation programs. And so we urge you to hold the line on Conservation Title funding at the amounts provided in the bill approved by the Senate Agriculture Committee on April 26th, 2012,” states the letter.

Conservation Title programs “are both popular and highly effective,” state the groups in the letter. These programs “recognize that the health of America’s soil, water, wildlife, and other natural resources is essential to the long term productivity and economic viability of agriculture and forestry, that protecting and managing our natural resources is critical to the future of American communities, and that most of our nation’s opportunities for hunting, fishing, and observing nature depend upon privately owned habitat on working farms, ranches and forest land.”

The letter concludes, “Maintaining, strengthening, and providing sufficient funding for the Conservation

Title programs will deliver multiple benefits for every region of America. Not the least of these is helping America's farmers, ranchers, and private forest land owners to stay on the land as stewards of America's natural resources."

The letter was coordinated and distributed by 11 agricultural, forestry, and conservation organizations. They are American Farmland Trust, Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, Ducks Unlimited, Environmental Defense Fund, Land Trust Alliance, National Association of Conservation Districts, National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, National Wildlife Federation, The Nature Conservancy, Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership and Trout Unlimited.

The [full text of the letter](#) to the leaders of the Agriculture Committees can be found online, including the complete list of signers.

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