

June 13, 2012

Dear Senator,

As the Senate begins debate on the Agriculture Reform, Food and Jobs Act of 2012 (S. 3240), the undersigned groups, representing millions of members across the country, urge you to support the Soil and Wetlands Conservation Amendment (S.A. 2219) introduced by Senator Cardin. This amendment would renew the long-standing conservation compact with farmers by re-attaching basic soil and water conservation measures to premium subsidies for crop insurance.

In exchange for a publicly funded safety net, farmers have for decades committed to adopt land management practices that have successfully reduced soil erosion and protected wetlands. By shifting subsidies away from direct payments and towards a strong crop insurance safety net, this new farm bill creates a loophole in the longstanding requirements that those who receive subsidies take some minimal steps to protect the public good. This amendment would help protect what we already have from being lost due to the changes in the safety net.

The Soil and Wetlands Conservation Amendment closes that loophole and ensures that taxpayer funds are not rewarding agricultural producers who are draining wetlands or farming highly erodible land without conservation measures. Without these key protections, the estimated \$95 billion to be spent on crop insurance over the next ten years under this bill will subsidize damaging soil erosion that chokes our waterways, increase the cost of water treatment and dredging, and reduce the long term productivity of farmland. It will also allow for the destruction of tens of thousands of acres of valuable wetlands, resulting in increased downstream flooding, loss of wildlife habitat and decreased water quality.

These soil and wetland conservation measures would be linked only to the taxpayer-funded premium subsidy for insurance and would not affect the ability of farmers to purchase crop insurance. The amendment does not in any way affect indemnity payments in the case of a disaster. Additionally, the measures retain the good faith exemptions, graduated penalty, and one-year grace period provisions from current law, ensuring that farmers would not be penalized for natural disasters such as flooding. The amendment also provides that producers who would be subject to these basic conservation requirements for the first time due to this provision would be granted five years to develop and implement their conservation plan.

As you work to reauthorize the Farm Bill over the coming days, we strongly urge you to support the Soil and Wetlands Conservation Amendment. Doing so will save money but more importantly ensure long term farm productivity by protecting vital natural resources.

Signed,

1000 Friends of Iowa
Alabama State Association of Cooperatives
Alliance for the Great Lakes
American Farmland Trust
American Indian Mothers Inc.

American Public Works Association
American Rivers
Arkansas Wildlife Federation
Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies
Association of Northwest Steelheaders
Audubon Society of New Hampshire
Cannon River Watershed Partnership
Center for Rural Affairs
Central Ohio Anglers & Hunters Club
Clean Water Action
Clean Water Network
Clean Wisconsin
Committee on the Middle Fork Vermilion River
Community Food Security Coalition
Conservation Council for Hawai'i
Defenders of Wildlife
Endangered Habitats League
Environmental and Energy Study Institute
Environmental Law and Policy Center
Environmental League of Massachusetts
Environmental Working Group
Farmworker Association of Florida
Friends of Blackwater
Friends of the Upper Delaware River
FSC Rural Training and Research Center, Epes, AL
Great Lakes Committee of the Izaak Walton League
Gulf of Maine Restoration Coalition
Gulf Restoration Network
Illinois Stewardship Alliance
Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy
Iowa Environmental Council
Iowa Farmers Union
Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation
Iowa Wildlife Federation
Iowa's County Conservation System
Izaak Walton League of America
Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future
Kansas Chapter of the Wildlife Society
Kansas Rural Center
Kansas Wildlife Federation
Kentucky Waterways Alliance
Lake Erie Waterkeeper Inc
Land Stewardship Project
Mid South Fly Fishers
Midwest Environmental Advocates
Milwaukee Riverkeeper

Minnesota Conservation Federation
Missouri Coalition for the Environment
MN Division - Izaak Walton League of America
National Association of Clean Water Agencies
National Audubon Society
National Committee for the New River
National Latino Farmers and Ranchers Trade Association
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition
National Wildlife Federation
Nature Abounds
Nebraska Wildlife Federation
Northern Great Plains Working Group
Ohio Ecological Food & Farm Association
Ohio Environmental Council
Ohio Farmers Union
Ohio River Foundation
Passaic River Coalition
Pollinator Partnership
Potomac River Association
Rural Action Sustainable Agriculture
Rural Advancement Fund
Rural Coalition/Coalición Rural
SC VOF
Sierra Club
Sierra Club Delta Chapter
Slow Food Columbus
Soil and Water Conservation Society
South Carolina Coastal Conservation League
South Dakota Chapter of The Wildlife Society
South Dakota Grasslands Coalition
South Dakota Wildlife Federation
Tennessee Parks and Greenways Foundation
Theodore Gordon Flyfishers, Inc.
Trout Unlimited
Union of Concerned Scientists
Virgin Islands Conservation Society
Water Advocates
Water Environment Federation
Wege Foundation
WhyHunger
Wildlife Forever
Wisconsin Wetlands Association
World Wildlife Fund