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April 25, 2011

Dear Member of Congress:

On behalf of over one million Ducks Unlimited members and supporters nationally, we encourage you to co-sponsor the Rural Heritage Conservation Extension Act (S. 339), introduced by Senators Max Baucus (D-MT), Charles Grassley (R-IA), and Jon Tester (D-MT), or the Conservation Easement Incentive Act, which will soon be introduced by Congressmen Jim Gerlach (R-PA) and Mike Thompson (D-CA).

Identical legislation in the 111th Congress (S. 812/H.R. 1831) had 41 Senate and 274 House co-sponsors from all 50 states. Presidents Bush and Obama have both sought to extend the incentive in their budget requests. The legislation is also strongly supported by more than 50 leading hunting, fishing, conservation, environmental, farming and ranching organizations and land trusts. It is truly a rare occurrence for such a diverse coalition to unite so strongly behind a common vision.

First passed in 2006, the enhanced tax deduction for conservation easement donations has proven benefits for conserving wetlands and other wildlife habitat while also expanding and enhancing hunting opportunities. Despite a recently passed extension, the authorization for these important tax incentives will expire on December 31, 2011. Recent data indicates that the increased incentives have resulted in the protection of upwards of one million acres annually since they were first enacted.

We encourage you to become a co-sponsor of the Rural Heritage Conservation Extension Act by contacting Tiffany Smith at the Senate Finance Committee (4-4515) or the Conservation Easement Incentive Act by contacting Lori Prater in Congressman Jim Gerlach's office (5-3415) or Carla McNeill in Congressman Mike Thompson's office (5-3311). Thank you for your consideration of this request and for your service on behalf of Ducks Unlimited and the rest of America's sportsmen and conservation community.

Please let me know if we can assist or provide additional information to you or your staff. I may be reached at (202) 347-1530 or bjames@ducks.org.

Sincerely,

Barton C. James
Director of Public Policy