

2013 FARM BILL

INCREASING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE AGRICULTURAL LANDS EASEMENTS PROGRAM

Let landowners make the decision

- 1) **This would not require ANY additional federal investment!!**
- 2) **ALE merges a program with no match requirement (GRP) with an established program that requires a cash match (FRPP).** The Secretary will need to have flexibility to make this work.
- 3) **A limiting factor in this program is the requirement for a 3rd party providing a cash match.** Many areas across the country don't have any reliable sources of matching funds, and rural counties may not have the tax base to create one.
- 4) **Landowners are willing to donate part of the value of their land.** Many landowners want to protect their land for future generations and are willing to provide more funding in order to ensure that agricultural land stays in agriculture. Why not let landowners voluntarily contribute more to conservation of our farm and rangeland resources?
- 5) **Increasing recognized landowner match really does level the playing field for traditional farmers and ranchers!** Permitting additional landowner match would actually help increase landowner access to the program.
- 6) **The need for agricultural land will increase in the future.** World population is expected to reach 9 billion by 2050 and with that are projections that at least a 70% increase in food production will be needed. For our future food security, it is vital that we maintain our agricultural land base and this amendment will help do that.
- 7) **Strategic landscape scale conservation will increase.** State technical committees set the parameters for funding priorities. Increasing the pool of available projects will have the dual impact of allowing contemplation of large scale projects and increasing the selection and quality of accessible choices.
- 8) **Allowing the Secretary to waive the cash match requirement in special circumstances** (not all transactions) would provide the Secretary flexibility to target easements in important places where they otherwise might not occur.
- 9) **Cooperating entities have "skin in the game."** Each cooperating entity invests considerable transaction and stewardship costs as well as staff time in each of these complex transactions. The costs – which range from \$15,000 to \$50,000 or more per project -- must be raised independently of USDA. The larger the project, the larger the costs.
- 10) **Landowners have "skin in the game."** Even when landowners are compensated for purchased easements they are still contributing more than they receive; permanently forgoing the opportunity to sell their land for development, but saving the agriculture and wildlife resources forever.
- 11) **Protecting these landscapes benefits all of society.** These dollars represent a direct investment into communities all across the country. Local production, agricultural economies and markets are secured, supplementing all the related businesses that rely on these landscapes (equipment, services, etc.)!