

The Honorable Herb Kohl
Chairman, Agriculture, Rural Development, FDA and Related Agencies Subcommittee
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
330 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Sam Brownback
Ranking Member, Agriculture, Rural Development, FDA and Related Agencies Subcommittee
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
303 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

February 5, 2010

Dear Chairman Kohl and Ranking Member Brownback:

We the undersigned organizations urge you to maintain the mandatory spending levels for conservation programs as provided in the 2008 Farm Bill and to reject the Obama Administration's proposed FY 11 cuts of over a half billion dollars to the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, Conservation Stewardship Program, Wetlands Reserve Program, Grasslands Reserve Program, Farmland Protection Program, Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program, and the Agricultural Management Assistance Program.

The Administration's proposals not only would rob farmers and ranchers of conservation and environmental stewardship assistance in FY 11, but would take away well over \$1 billion from the farm bill conservation baseline, or nearly a quarter of the widely-lauded conservation increase in the 2008 Farm Bill.

The levels of funding set in the 2008 farm bill were arrived at through a lengthy process of debate and compromise. Congress ultimately approved the Food, Conservation and Energy Act twice over the vetoes of President Bush. We are disappointed that President Obama's budget continues the unfortunate pattern set by the previous Administration of proposing cuts to conservation programs below mandatory levels established in the farm bill. We take heart, however, because Congress has acted to reverse proposed cuts in conservation in the last three fiscal years. We urge you to stay the course and uphold the mandatory funding levels agreed to in the 2008 Farm Bill.

Farmers and ranchers are eager to share the cost of protecting the environment, but demand for participation in conservation programs routinely far outstrips available funding. This proposal will only exacerbate that problem, and will undermine conservation practice adoption on-the-ground.

Applied conservation provides clean water, erosion reduction, carbon sinks, improved wildlife habitat, wetland protection, and other important public benefits that should not be lost. We urge you to maintain the mandatory conservation funding levels as agreed to in the 2008 Farm Bill and thus reject the President's proposed one-year and permanent cuts.

Sincerely,

American Farmland Trust
American Rivers
Audubon
Chesapeake Bay Foundation
Clean Water Network
Clean Wisconsin
Connecticut Farmland Trust
Connecticut Forest & Park Association
Defenders of Wildlife
Environmental Defense Fund
Environmental Working Group
Great Land Conservation Land Trust
Iowa Environmental Council
Izaak Walton League of America
Gulf Restoration Network
Land Trust Alliance
National Association of Conservation Districts
National Center for Appropriate Technology
National Farmers Union
National Organic Coalition
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition
National Wildlife Federation
Natural Resources Defense Council
Northeast Organic Farming Association of Connecticut
Organic Farming Research Foundation
Partners for Sustainable Pollination
Pollinator Partnership
River Alliance of Wisconsin
Rivers Alliance of Connecticut
River Country Resource Conservation and Development
Union of Concerned Scientists
Wisconsin Environment
Wisconsin Land and Water Conservation Association
Wisconsin Wildlife Federation
Working Lands Alliance
World Wildlife Fund
Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation

cc: Subcommittee Members