

February 28, 2012

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
Chairwoman
The Honorable Pat Roberts
Ranking Member

The Honorable Frank D. Lucas
Chairman
The Honorable Collin Peterson
Ranking Member

Senate Committee on Agriculture,
Nutrition and Forestry
328A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC, 20510

House Committee on Agriculture
1301 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC, 20515

Dear Chairmen Stabenow and Lucas, Ranking Members Roberts and Peterson:

As you renew food and farm policy, we urge you to strengthen USDA conservation programs in order to reward farmers and ranchers who take steps to protect our air, water and wildlife.

Because all farmers and ranchers in all regions are eligible, expanding USDA conservation programs would more equitably distribute scarce federal resources. In addition, making key improvements to USDA conservation programs will help produce far more public goods – including cleaner air, cleaner water, and open spaces – that benefit all Americans.

Unfortunately, two out of three farmers and ranchers are turned away when they offer to contribute to a healthier environment because of insufficient USDA funding. Since 2002, Congress has cut more than \$4 billion from USDA conservation programs – the deepest cuts made to any farm bill program.

Farmers can produce more than food and fiber – they can also produce cleaner air, cleaner water, open spaces, and abundant wildlife. We urge you to support all farmers and all regions of the country by renewing America's investment in USDA conservation programs.

Sincerely,

Tim Male
Vice President of Conservation Policy
Defenders of Wildlife

Brian Moore
Legislative Director
National Audubon Society

Scott Faber
Vice President for Government Affairs
Environmental Working Group

Franz Matzner
Associate Director of Government Affairs
Natural Resources Defense Council

Sara Chieffo
Legislative Director
League of Conservation Voters

Ed Hopkins
Director, Environmental Quality Program
Sierra Club