



THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

5410 Grosvenor Lane • Bethesda, MD 20814-2144
Tel: (301) 897-9770 • Fax: (301) 530-2471
E-mail: twswildlife.org

29 September 2014

Chief Jason Weller
Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., SW, Room 5105-A
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Chief Weller:

The Wildlife Society would like to take this opportunity to thank you for the great work you and your team have accomplished in implementing the conservation programs in the Agriculture Act of 2014. The Wildlife Society, representing nearly 10,000 professional wildlife biologists and managers, supports Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) efforts to maintain and enhance essential wildlife resources through partnerships on private land.

Secretary Vilsack announced earlier this month that \$328 million would be allocated to the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) this fiscal year. We appreciate that \$223 million, 68 percent of ACEP funds, have been assigned to Wetland Reserve Easements, which provides direct, explicit benefits to wildlife. This allocation maintains the proportion of wetland easement funds compared to the amount of farm, ranch, and grassland easement funds from the previous Farm Bill. In a time when Congress has reduced funding for all easement programs, we appreciate your efforts to maintain historic funding ratios and ensure essential funds are available for restoring and protecting valuable wetlands.

Wetlands are essential to rural America, providing flood mitigation, water purification, and wildlife habitat. The Wetland Reserve Program was crucial to conservation efforts, protecting and restoring more than 2.3 million acres of wetlands in its 20 year history. Wildlife professionals continue to rely on the public-private partnerships facilitated by wetland easements that enable them to perform science-based management of wildlife resources on private lands. We are confident that even under a new program structure and reduced overall funding the NRCS will continue to invest in wetlands, to the benefit of wildlife, agricultural producers, and all Americans.

We thank you for your dedication to conserving wildlife resources and will continue to support NRCS in that effort.

Sincerely,

Jonathan B. Haufler, President
The Wildlife Society