July 11, 2013

The Honorable John Boehner
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Boehner,

As you consider the House Agriculture Appropriations Bill, which has seen more than its fair share of cuts in the past two years, the undersigned organizations stress the importance of Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA) to agricultural conservation efforts.

CTA is vital to all conservation programs that are administered through the Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). NRCS is a scientific, non-regulatory agency dedicated to the implementation of voluntary, incentive-based conservation practices that protect our most precious natural resources.

CTA maximizes the benefits of a productive landscape by addressing challenges pertaining to water quality and quantity, healthy soils, forests, wildlife habitat, and landscapes that resist drought and other natural weather events. The CTA program provides landowners with site-specific solutions in the field needed to implement conservation practices on their own lands, while providing accountability to ensure maximum return on the public investment. For every dollar invested in conservation implementation, many more are reaped by future generations who enjoy clean air and water, healthy soil, wildlife, pollination services, and a safe and ample food supply. As demands on the landscape grow, CTA also helps landowners implement preventative measures, avoiding the pressure of reactionary regulations.

CTA provides NRCS employees with the ability to consult with producers about ways to best address specific resource concerns on their land. This expertise is provided by local conservation professionals throughout the nation, who help landowners become better stewards of their natural resources by assisting them with resource assessments, practical design, planning and monitoring of conservation practices. CTA also enables these local professionals to work with landowners in the development of conservation plans which are required to identify and participate in financial assistance programs. CTA truly is the “ounce of prevention” that is exponentially better than the “pound of cure.”

Inadequate technical assistance would diminish producer accountability and reduce the effectiveness of critical conservation practices on the land. As we move into the 2014 appropriations cycle, we ask that technical assistance remains a top priority.

Sincerely,

Agricultural Retailers Association
American Farm Bureau Federation
American Farmland Trust
American Society of Agronomy
Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
Association of Rangeland Consultants
Crop Science Society of America
Defenders of Wildlife
Environmental and Energy Study Institute
Izaak Walton League of America
Land Improvement Contractors of America
National Association of Conservation Districts
National Association of Resource Conservation and Development Councils
National Bobwhite Conservation Initiative
National Association of State Conservation Agencies
National Association of State Departments of Agriculture
National Conservation District Employees Association
National Corn Growers Association
National Farmers Union
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition
National Wildlife Federation
Pollinator Partnership
Society for Range Management
Soil and Water Conservation Society
Soil Science Society of America
South East Dairy Farmers Association
The Fertilizer Institute
The Nature Conservancy
The Wildlife Society
Union of Concerned Scientists

cc: Members, United States House of Representatives