

June 12, 2012

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC

The Honorable John Boehner
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC

Dear Majority Leader Reid, Minority Leader McConnell, Speaker Boehner, and Minority Leader Pelosi:

We are large and small organizations, businesses and landowners from all across America who believe that the Conservation Title of the Farm Bill is vital to the future of our country's natural resources. We commend the efforts of the Senate and House Agriculture Committees to move the Farm Bill forward in these fiscally challenging times, but as this process progresses, we urge that no further cuts be made to funding for the Conservation Title of the bill beyond the level approved by the Senate Agriculture Committee on April 26th, 2012.

The Conservation Title programs are both popular and highly effective. They recognize that the health of America's soil, water, wildlife, and other natural resources is essential to the long term productivity and economic viability of agriculture and forestry, that protecting and managing our natural resources is critical to the future of American communities, and that most of our nation's opportunities for hunting, fishing, and observing nature depend upon privately owned habitat on working farms, ranches and forest land. The Conservation Title programs help to protect these resources in a uniquely successful way—by funding a variety of voluntary partnerships and cooperative conservation efforts between the U.S. Department of Agriculture and private landowners. These conservation programs are essential to the sustainability of U.S. agriculture and forestry and to meeting the growing demand for food and fiber at home and abroad.

Farm Bill Conservation Title programs are high-leverage investments in rural America. Resulting projects catalyze additional public and private investments, creating jobs and energizing local economies. In many parts of the country there are long waiting lists of landowners who would like to participate in such programs as the Wetlands Reserve Program, the Grasslands Reserve Program, and the Farm and Ranchland Protection Program. And because the demand for farm products and increased production are placing ever-greater pressure on soil and water resources, programs like the Environmental Quality Incentives Program and the Conservation Stewardship Program, which help landowners undertake conservation practices on working lands, are more needed now than ever.

Since the 2008 farm bill was enacted, Conservation Title programs have already been cut significantly through the annual appropriations process, particularly in the last two agriculture appropriations bills, and these cuts have had real and unfortunate impacts on the ground. The additional significant cuts to conservation funding included in the bill advanced by the Senate

Agriculture Committee, if enacted, mean that the Conservation Title is already contributing more than its fair share to budget deficit reduction. While policy improvements can help reduce the impact of these additional cuts, they will, nevertheless have a negative impact on the ground. Further cuts would jeopardize this country's entire system of successful agricultural and forestry conservation programs. And so we urge you to hold the line on Conservation Title funding at the amounts provided in the bill approved by the Senate Agriculture Committee on April 26th, 2012.

Maintaining, strengthening, and providing sufficient funding for the Conservation Title programs will deliver multiple benefits for every region of America. Not the least of these is helping America's farmers, ranchers, and private forest land owners to stay on the land as stewards of America's natural resources.

Thank you for your consideration of our views on this critical matter.

Respectfully,

523 National, State and Local Organizations, Businesses and Landowners

National Organizations

AG Business Consultants
Agren
American Bird Conservancy
American Farmland Trust
American Fisheries Society
American Forest & Paper Association
American Forests
American Rivers
American Sportfishing Association
Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies
Association of State Floodplain Managers
Audubon
Bat Conservation International
Berkley Conservation Institute, Pure Fishing
Bill McGuire Conservation, LLC
CCOF
Center for Rural Affairs
Chicago Botanic Garden
Chicago Zoological Society/Brookfield Zoo
Clean Water Network
Community Food Security Coalition
Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology
Ducks Unlimited
Ecological Farming Association
Environmental and Energy Study Institute
Environmental Defense Fund
Equine Land Conservation Resource

Great Sunflower Project
Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy
Izaak Walton League of America
Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future
Land Trust Alliance
Markon Cooperative
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
Missouri BASS Federation Nation
National Association of Conservation Districts
National Association of Resource Conservation & Development Councils
National Association of State Conservation Agencies
National Association of State Foresters
National Audubon Society
National Bobwhite Conservation Initiative
National Catholic Rural Life Conference
National Farmers Union
National Latino Farmers & Ranchers Trade Association
National Parks Conservation Association
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition
National Wildlife Federation
Natural Resources Defense Council
Nature Abounds
NCAT
Oregon Tilth
Organic Farming Research Foundation
Organic Valley

Orion-The Hunters' Institute
Pesticide Action Network North America
Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever
Pheasants Forever, Inc.
Quail and Upland Wildlife Federation
Quail Unlimited
Quality Deer Management Association
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
Rural Coalition/Coalición Rural
Save The Hens Foundation
Saving Birds Thru Habitat
Society of American Foresters
Soil and Water Conservation Society
Southern Maryland Audubon Society

The Conservation Fund
The Institute for Bird Populations
The Lyme Timber Company
The Nature Conservancy
The Praxis Project
The Trumpeter Swan Society
The Trust for Public Land
The Wildlife Society
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
Trout Unlimited
Union of Concerned Scientists
Women, Food and Agriculture Network
World Wildlife Fund
Zimmer Environmental Improvement LLC

State and Local Organizations

AL

Cahaba Riverkeeper
National Farmers Trust
Weeks Bay Foundation

AR

Arkansas Canoe Club
Arkansas Forestry Association
Arkansas Wildlife Federation
Audubon Arkansas
Buffalo River Foundation
Central Arkansas Land Trust
Land Trust of Arkansas
Northwest Arkansas Land Trust

AZ

Arizona Land and Water Trust
North Country Conservancy

CA

California Association of Resource
Central Valley Farmland Trust
Conservation Districts
California Climate and Agriculture
Network
California FarmLink
California Food and Justice Coalition
California Invasive Plant Council

California Native Plant Society
California Rangeland Trust
California Rice Commission
California Waterfowl Association
Center for Ecosystem Management and
Restoration
Central Valley Bird Club
City of Davis
Claravale Farm
Eastern Sierra Land Trust
Endangered Habitats League
Institute for Ecological Health
Lassen Land and Trails Trust
Marin Agricultural Land Trust
Mendocino Land Trust
Northern California Regional Land Trust
Occidental Arts and Ecology Center
Ojai Valley Land Conservancy
Peninsula Open Space Trust
Rominger Brothers Farms
San Joaquin River Parkway and
Conservation Trust
Santa Clara County Open Space
Authority
Sequoia Riverlands Trust
Solano Land Trust
Sustainable Conservation
Watershed Research & Training Center
Wild Farm Alliance
Yolo Land Trust

CO

Black Canyon Regional Land Trust
Colorado Coalition of Land Trusts
Colorado Trout Unlimited
Colorado Wildlife Federation
Gunnison Ranchland Conservation
Legacy
La Plata Open Space Conservancy
Larry D. Harvey, P.C.
Mesa Land Trust
Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory
San Isabel Land Protection Trust

CT

Connecticut Audubon Society
Connecticut Farmland Trust
Connecticut Land Conservation Council
Cornwall Conservation Trust Inc.
Farmington River Watershed Association
The Kent Land Trust
North Stonington Citizens Land Alliance
Roxbury Land Trust
Southbury Land Trust
Very Alive
Working Lands Alliance

DE

Delaware Wild Lands
JLCSurvey Land Surveying

FL

Adams Ranch
Alico, Inc.
Atlantic Blue Group, Inc.
CRCA Riverwatch
Durando Ranches
Florida Wildlife Federation
Friends of the Tampa Bay National
Wildlife Refuges
JjW Sod
Joiner Consulting
Kissimmee Oaks Ranch
Northern Everglades Alliance

Okee Hammock
Old River Cattle Co.
Saunders Real Estate
Tall Timbers Research Station & Land
Conservancy
Venture Four, LLC

GA

Environment Georgia
Flint Riverkeeper
Georgia Conservation Voters
Georgia Council Trout Unlimited
Georgia Land Conservation Center
Georgia River Network
Georgia Wildlife Federation
Georgia Wildlife Resources Division
The Georgia Conservancy
Upper Chattahoochee Riverkeeper

HI

Conservation Council for Hawai'i
Hawaii Farm Bureau Federation
Hawaii Sheep and Goat Association
Hawaiian Islands Land Trust
Hawaii's Thousand Friends
Molokai Land Trust
North Shore Community Land Trust
Oahu Resource Conservation and
Development Council

IA

Black Hawk Soil and Water District
Commissioners
Cherokee County Pheasants Forever
Chickasaw County Conservation Board
Des Moines Water Works
Iowa Breast Cancer Edu-action
Iowa Chapter Soil and Water
Conservation Society
Iowa Environmental Council
Iowa Floodplain and Stormwater
Management Association
Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation
Iowa Turkey Federation
Iowa's County Conservation System

Practical Farmers of Iowa
Prairie Rapids Audubon Society
Story County Soil and Water
Conservation District
The University of Iowa

ID

Big Creek Ranch
Lava Lake Institute for Science and
Conservation
Palouse Land Trust
Teton Regional Land Trust

IL

Bird Conservation Network
Environmental Law & Policy Center
Illinois Audubon Society
Illinois Environmental Council
Oak Brook Trout Unlimited
Openlands
Prairie Rivers Network
The Wetlands Initiative

IN

Clinton Chapter, Izaak Walton League of
America
Dearborn County Farm Bureau Inc.
DeKalb County Chapter, Izaak Walton
League of America, Inc.
Eagle Creek Watershed Alliance
Fulton County Soil and Water
Conservation District
Geist Fall Creek Watershed Alliance
Griffith Chapter, Izaak Walton League of
America
Hoosier Environmental Council
Howard County Soil and Water
Conservation District
Indiana Association of Soil and Water
Conservation Districts
Indiana Division, Izaak Walton League
of America
Indiana Park and Recreation Association
Indiana State Council of Pheasants
Forever

Indiana Wildlife Federation
Lake County Parks and Recreation
Department
Lake Erie Waterkeeper, Save Maumee
Program
Lincoln Hills Fish and Wildlife
Committee
Oxbow, Inc.
Parke County Soil & Water Conservation
District
Pheasants Forever Indiana State Council
Porter County Chapter, Izaak Walton
League of America
Porter County Soil & Water
Conservation District
Save the Dunes
Scott County Soil and Water
Conservation District
Sycamore Land Trust
Vanderburgh Soil & Water Conservation
District
Vermillion County, Indiana, Soil &
Water Conservation District
Vigo County Soil & Water Conservation
District
Wells Co. Soil and Water Conservation
District

KS

Audubon of Kansas
Geary Co. Fish and Game Assoc.
Kansas Land Trust
Kansas Rural Center
Kansas Wildlife Federation
Ranchland Trust of Kansas

KY

Kentucky Department of Fish and
Wildlife Resources
Kentucky Environmental Education
Projects, Inc.
Kentucky State Nature Preserves
Commission
Kentucky Waterways Alliance

LA

America's WETLAND Foundation
Black Bear Conservation Coalition
Gulf Restoration Network
Orleans Audubon Society

MA

Appalachian Mountain Club
Bolton Conservation Trust
Boxford Trails Association/ Boxford
Open Land Trust, Inc.
Buzzards Bay Coalition
Environmental League of Massachusetts
Franklin Land Trust
Greater Newburyport Edible Garden
Group
Hilltown Anti-Herbicide Coalition
Hull Land Conservation Trust
Land Conservation Associates
Mass Association of Conservation
Commissions
Mass Audubon
Mass Climate Action Network
Mass Land Trust Coalition
Massachusetts League of Environmental
Voters
Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust
Natural Resources Trust of Mansfield,
Inc.
Pascommuck Conservation Trust
Rutland Land Conservancy
Sheffield Land Trust

MD

Baltimore County Land Trust Alliance
Chesapeake Bay Commission
Chesapeake Bay Foundation
Chesapeake Wildlife Heritage
Friends of Herring Run Parks
Oxbow Associates, LLC
Piney Run Rural Legacy
Sportsman's Hall Farm

ME

Maine Farmland Trust
Natural Resources Council of Maine
QDMA-Downeast Branch
Sheepscot Valley Conservation
Association

MI

Cadillac Area Land Conservancy
Chikaming Open Lands
Grand Traverse Regional Land
Conservancy
HeadWaters Land Conservancy
Heart of the Lakes Center for Land
Conservation Policy
Kalamazoo River Cleanup Coalition
Lapeer Land Conservancy
Leelanau Conservancy
Legacy Land Conservancy
Six Rivers Regional Land Conservancy
Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council
Two Rivers Coalition
WasteWater Education

MN

Audubon Minnesota
Central Minnesotas Audubon Society
Friends of the Mississippi River
Friends of the Refuge Headwaters
Izaak Walton League of America,
Minnehaha Chapter
Land Stewardship Project
Minnesota Center for Environmental
Advocacy
Minnesota Chapter of the Wildlife
Society
Minnesota Conservation Federation
Minnesota Department of Natural
Resources
Minnesota Division Izaak Walton
League of America
Minnesota Land Trust
Minnesota Prairie Chicken Society
St. Paul Audubon Society
Will Dilg Chapter Izaak Walton League

MO

Conservation Federation of Missouri
DA Watson & Company
Forrest Keeling Nursery
JR Fleming Forestry LLC
Missouri Coalition for the Environment
Missouri Forest Products Association
Missouri Parks Association
Missouri Prairie Foundation

MS

Lower Mississippi Foundation
Mississippi Cattlemen's Association

MT

Bitter Root Land Trust
Five Valleys Land Trust
Montana Association of Land Trusts

NC

Buncombe County Agricultural Advisory Board
Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy
Conservation Trust for North Carolina
Foothills Conservancy of North Carolina, Inc.
Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust
North Carolina Coastal Land Trust
North Carolina Trout Unlimited State Council
North Carolina Wildlife Federation
Northeast Pasture Consortium
Southeastern Section - The Wildlife Society
Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy

ND

North Dakota Natural Resources Trust

NE

Nebraska Big Game Society
Nebraska Chapter of The Wildlife Society

Nebraska Land Trust
Nebraska Sportsmen's Foundation
Nebraska Sustainable Agriculture Society
Nebraska Wildlife Federation
Wachiska Audubon Society

NV

Ranch Open Space of Nevada

NH

Bear-Paw Regional Greenways
Ecosystem Management Consultants
Harris Center for Conservation Education
Monadnock Conservancy
NH Fish & Game Department
Society for the Protection of NH Forests

NJ

Association of New Jersey
Environmental Commissions
Bergen SWAN
Burnham Park Association
Conservation Resources Inc
Conserve Wildlife Foundation of New Jersey
D&R Greenway Land Trust
Friends of Hopewell Valley Open Space
Garden Club of Madison
Great Egg Harbor Watershed Association
Monmouth Conservation Foundation
Musconetcong Watershed Association
New Jersey Audubon
New Jersey Conservation Foundation
New Jersey Highlands Coalition
New York-New Jersey Trail Conference
NY/NJ Baykeeper
Pinelands Preservation Alliance
Raritan Headwaters Association
Ridge and Valley Conservancy
Schiff Natural Lands Trust
Stony Brook Milstone Watersheds Association
Tewksbury Land Trust

The Land Conservancy of New Jersey

Oklahoma Assn. of Conservation
Districts

NM

New Mexico Land Conservancy

NY

Adirondack Council
Agricultural Stewardship Association
Audubon New York
Esopus Creek Conservancy, Inc.
Indian River Lakes Conservancy
Mohonk Preserve
New York City Audubon Society
North Shore Land Alliance
Northeast Organic Farming Association-
Interstate Council
Oblong Land Conservancy
Orange County Land Trust
Peconic Land Trust
Scenic Hudson
Serpentine Art and Nature Commons,
Inc.
Somers Land Trust
Western New York Land Conservancy
Woodstock Land Conservancy

OH

Blanchard River Watershed Partnership
B-W Greenway Community Land Trust
Clinton County (Ohio) Open Lands
Friends of Lower Muskingum River
Little Beaver Creek Land Foundation
Ohio Division of Wildlife
Ohio Environmental Council
Ohio Federation of Soil and Water
Conservation Districts
Ohio River Foundation
Ohio Wetlands Association
Western Reserve Land Conservancy

OK

Central Oklahoma Quail Forever
Grant County Conservation Commission

OR

Central Coast Land Conservancy
Deschutes Land Trust
Elk River Land Trust
Greenbelt Land Trust
Josephine County Stewardship Group
Lake County Resources Initiative
McKenzie River Trust
Northwest Center for Alternatives to
Pesticides
Oregon Division of the Izaak Walton
League of America
Oregon Habitat Joint Venture
Oregon Invasive Species Council
Oregon Rural Action
Salem Audubon Society
Siuslaw Institute
Southern Oregon Forest Restoration
Collaborative
Sustainable Northwest
Wallowa Land Trust, Inc.

PA

Centre County Farmland Trust
Delaware Highlands Conservancy
Farm & Natural Lands Trust of York
County
Foundation for PA Watersheds
French Creek Valley Conservancy
Lake Erie Region Conservancy
Lancaster Farmland Trust
Lehigh County Agricultural Land
Preservation Board
Pennsylvania Council of Churches
Pennsylvania Land Trust Association
South Branch Tunkhannock Creek
Watershed Coalition
The Land Conservancy for Southern
Chester County
Western Pennsylvania Conservancy
Woodsong Hollow Farm

SC

Beaufort Open Land Trust
Congaree Land Trust
GrowFood Carolina
Naturaland Trust
SC Coastal Conservation League
Upper Savannah Land Trust
Winyah Rivers Foundation

TN

Mississippi River Corridor - Tennessee
Tennessee Clean Water Network
Tennessee Ornithological society
Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency
The Land Trust for Tennessee

TX

Connemara Conservancy
Houston Wilderness
Pines and Prairies Land Trust
Texas Land Trust Council
The Frontera Land Alliance

UT

Virgin River Land Preservation
Association

VA

Capital Region Land Conservancy
Conservation Committee- Virginia
Society of Ornithology
Fredericksburg-Rappahannock Chapter
of the Izaak Walton League of America
Friends of Dyke Marsh
Land Trust of Virginia
Local Food Hub
New River Land Trust
Northern Virginia Conservation Trust
Piedmont Environmental Council
Potomac Conservancy
Rappahannock County Conservation
Alliance
Roanoke Valley Chapter of the Izaak
Walton League of America

Rockbridge Area Conservation Council
Shenandoah Valley Network
Southern Environmental Law Center
Trout Unlimited
Valley Conservation Council
Virginia Association for Biological
Farming

VT

Greensboro Land Trust
Putney Mountain Association, Inc.
Vermont Land Trust

WA

Chehalis River Basin Land Trust
Chelan-Douglas Land Trust
Climate Solutions
Columbia Land Trust
Forterra
Jefferson Land Trust
Mason Conservation District
Mt. Adams Resource Stewards
Nisqually Land Trust
North Olympic Land Trust
Northwest Farm Bill Action Group
Northwest Natural Resource Group
Okanogan Land Trust
PCC Farmland Trust
San Juan County Land Bank
San Juan Preservation Trust
Skagit Land Trust
Tilth Producers of Washington
Vashon-Maury Island Land Trust
Whidbey Camano Land Trust

WI

Baraboo Range Preservation Association
Caledonia Conservancy
Cedar Lakes Conservation Foundation
Clean Wisconsin
Door County Land Trust
Driftless Area Land Conservancy
Gathering Waters Conservancy
Green-Rock Audubon Society
Madison Audubon Society

Michael Fields Agricultural Institute
Muskego Lakes Land Conservancy
Natural Heritage Land Trust
River Alliance of Wisconsin
St. Croix River Association
Tall Pines Conservancy
Waukesha County Environmental Action
League, Inc.
Wisconsin Audubon Council
Wisconsin Farmers Union
Wisconsin Lakes
Wisconsin Wetlands Association

Wisconsin Wildlife Federation

WV

West Virginia Agricultural Land
Protection Authority
West Virginia Land Trust

WY

Wyoming Land Trust
Wyoming Stock Growers Association
Wyoming Stock Growers Land Trust

Cc:

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow, Chairwoman, Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry

The Honorable Pat Roberts, Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry

The Honorable Frank D. Lucas, Chairman, House Committee on Agriculture

The Honorable Collin C. Peterson, Ranking Member, House Committee on Agriculture