

The Honorable Blanche Lincoln
328A Senate Russell Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

March 19, 2010

Dear Chairwoman Lincoln,

We understand and appreciate the critical need to provide additional funding for the child nutrition school meal programs. However, we are deeply disappointed in your proposal to cut the Environmental Quality Incentives Program by \$2.8 billion over the next decade in order to provide this funding. There are other sources for this funding outside of the Farm Bill conservation programs that could be tapped to pay for these needs without taking away from the programs that support farmers and forest landowners in their efforts to provide conservation benefits in addition to food, forest products, and fiber. However, if Farm Bill resources are determined to be the only resort, then fairness demands that the conservation title should not bear the full burden of providing the solution.

This current proposal would not only rob farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners of conservation and environmental stewardship assistance in the next decade, but would take away well over \$2 billion from the farm bill conservation baseline, or nearly half of the widely-lauded conservation increase in the 2008 Farm Bill. This cut clearly violates the carefully negotiated compromise that you supported in the 2008 Farm Bill.

Farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners 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, energy conservation, erosion reduction, carbon sinks, improved wildlife habitat, wetland protection, and other important public benefits that should not be lost. We urge you to modify the current proposal to craft a fairer offset package to provide the funding needed for child nutrition reauthorization. We would like to work with you and the committee to find an equitable solution to this pressing problem and help provide added resources to school feeding programs.

Sincerely,

American Farmland Trust
Chesapeake Bay Foundation
Defenders of Wildlife

Environmental Defense Fund
Environmental Working Group
Izaak Walton League of America
National Association of Conservation Districts
National Audubon Society
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition
National Wildlife Federation
Natural Resources Defense Council
Partners for Sustainable Pollination
Pollinator Partnership
Union of Concerned Scientists
World Wildlife Fund

cc:

The Honorable Saxby Chambliss, Ranking Member
The Honorable Patrick J. Leahy, Vermont
The Honorable Tom Harkin, Iowa
The Honorable Kent Conrad
The Honorable Max Baucus
The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
The Honorable E. Benjamin Nelson
The Honorable Sherrod Brown, Ohio
The Honorable Robert Casey, Jr.
The Honorable Amy Klobuchar
The Honorable Michael Bennet
The Honorable Kirsten Gillibrand
The Honorable Richard G. Lugar
The Honorable Thad Cochran
The Honorable Mitch McConnell
The Honorable Pat Roberts
The Honorable Mike Johanns
The Honorable Charles Grassley
The Honorable John Thune
The Honorable John Cornyn