

The Honorable Herb Kohl  
Chairman, Agriculture, Rural Development, FDA and Related Agencies Subcommittee  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. Senate  
330 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Sam Brownback  
Ranking Member, Agriculture, Rural Development, FDA and Related Agencies Subcommittee  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. Senate  
303 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

February 5, 2010

Dear Chairman Kohl and Ranking Member Brownback:

We the undersigned organizations urge you to maintain the mandatory spending levels for conservation programs as provided in the 2008 Farm Bill and to reject the Obama Administration's proposed FY 11 cuts of over a half billion dollars to the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, Conservation Stewardship Program, Wetlands Reserve Program, Grasslands Reserve Program, Farmland Protection Program, Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program, and the Agricultural Management Assistance Program.

The Administration's proposals not only would rob farmers and ranchers of conservation and environmental stewardship assistance in FY 11, but would take away well over \$1 billion from the farm bill conservation baseline, or nearly a quarter of the widely-lauded conservation increase in the 2008 Farm Bill.

The levels of funding set in the 2008 farm bill were arrived at through a lengthy process of debate and compromise. Congress ultimately approved the Food, Conservation and Energy Act twice over the vetoes of President Bush. We are disappointed that President Obama's budget continues the unfortunate pattern set by the previous Administration of proposing cuts to conservation programs below mandatory levels established in the farm bill. We take heart, however, because Congress has acted to reverse proposed cuts in conservation in the last three fiscal years. We urge you to stay the course and uphold the mandatory funding levels agreed to in the 2008 Farm Bill.

Farmers and ranchers 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, erosion reduction, carbon sinks, improved wildlife habitat, wetland protection, and other important public benefits that should not be lost. We urge you to maintain the mandatory conservation funding levels as agreed to in the 2008 Farm Bill and thus reject the President's proposed one-year and permanent cuts.

Sincerely,

American Farmland Trust  
American Rivers  
Audubon  
Chesapeake Bay Foundation  
Clean Water Network  
Clean Wisconsin  
Connecticut Farmland Trust  
Connecticut Forest & Park Association  
Defenders of Wildlife  
Environmental Defense Fund  
Environmental Working Group  
Great Land Conservation Land Trust  
Iowa Environmental Council  
Izaak Walton League of America  
Gulf Restoration Network  
Land Trust Alliance  
Michael Fields Agricultural Institute  
National Association of Conservation Districts  
National Center for Appropriate Technology  
National Farmers Union  
National Organic Coalition  
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition  
National Wildlife Federation  
Natural Resources Defense Council  
Northeast Organic Farming Association of Connecticut  
Organic Farming Research Foundation  
Partners for Sustainable Pollination  
Pollinator Partnership  
River Alliance of Wisconsin  
Rivers Alliance of Connecticut  
River Country Resource Conservation and Development  
Union of Concerned Scientists  
Wisconsin Environment  
Wisconsin Land and Water Conservation Association  
Wisconsin Wildlife Federation  
Working Lands Alliance  
World Wildlife Fund  
Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation

**cc: Subcommittee Members**