

September 11, 2012

Dear Senator:

We the undersigned organizations understand the need to address disaster assistance and continue to believe the best way to accomplish that objective is to finalize a 5-year farm bill. The Senate-passed and House Committee-passed 5-year farm bills, though not the stand-alone House-passed disaster bill, include comprehensive disaster aid. The best disaster assistance bill is a new long-term farm bill and we encourage you to get the job done and pass a new farm bill yet this year.

If, however, a disaster relief package is brought to the floor as a stand-alone bill or included in a farm bill extension measure, we urge that mandatory farm bill conservation funding not be cut to pay for disaster assistance.

Cutting conservation funding to pay for drought assistance is short-sighted and would worsen the impacts of future droughts and other extreme weather events by cutting the very programs that help build disaster resiliency into farming operations.

Such a strategy would not meet the test of basic fairness, and, perhaps most importantly would stand in direct opposition to the interests of most farmers in America. A [poll released this week](#) found that **71 percent of farmers across 13 farm states oppose paying for short-term drought relief by cutting conservation programs.**

With a historic drought in the countryside, we need to reward farmers and ranchers for smart, proactive land and resource management, not cut the long-term conservation programs upon which they depend.

Sincerely,

American Farmland Trust
American Rivers
Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
American Sportfishing Association
Association of State Floodplain Managers
Chesapeake Bay Foundation
Ducks Unlimited
Environmental and Energy Study Institute
Environmental Defense Fund
Izaak Walton League of America
Land Trust Alliance
National Association of Clean Water Agencies
National Association of Conservation Districts
National Association of Resource Conservation & Development Councils
National Association of State Conservation Agencies
National Audubon Society
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition
National Wildlife Federation

Pheasants Forever
Pollinator Partnership
Quail Forever
Soil and Water Conservation Society
The Nature Conservancy
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
The Trust for Public Land
The Wildlife Society
Trout Unlimited
Union of Concerned Scientists
Water Environment Federation
World Wildlife Fund