

October 29, 2013

Dear Farm Bill Conferee,

As the House and Senate begins conferencing the final 2013 Farm Bill, the undersigned groups, representing millions of members across the country, urge you protect grasslands, wetlands, healthy soil and clean water by supporting a national sodsaver provision and re-coupling basic soil and water conservation measures to premium subsidies for crop insurance. Both of these provisions, included in the Senate bill, ensure that taxpayer dollars are not used to incentivize risky or environmentally destructive practices. Conservation compliance and sodsaver are among the top farm bill priorities for our groups, and both will be determining factors as we consider our support for a final bill.

For decades, in exchange for a publicly funded safety net, farmers have committed to adopt land management practices that successfully reduced soil erosion and protected wetlands. By shifting subsidies away from direct payments and towards a strong crop insurance safety net, this new farm bill creates a loophole in the longstanding requirements that those who receive subsidies take minimal steps to protect the public good. Without these key protections, billions of taxpayer dollars spent on crop insurance over coming years will subsidize soil erosion that will choke our waterways, increase the cost of water treatment and dredging, and reduce the long term productivity of farmland. It will also allow for the destruction of tens of thousands of acres of valuable wetlands, resulting in increased downstream flooding, loss of wildlife habitat and decreased water quality. To keep these protections in place, it is critical that the final farm bill re-couple conservation compliance with crop insurance premium subsidies and does not weaken existing wetland conservation provisions.

Native grasslands across the country are disappearing at an alarming rate, threatening grassland-dependent wildlife species as well as the ranching and hunting industries dependent on those lands. From 2011 to 2012 alone, nearly 400,000 non-cropland acres were “broken out” for crop production. These acres are being lost across the entire country. In fact, over this period, more than 65 percent of these losses occurred outside of the Prairie Pothole Region states. A nationwide sodsaver provision will reduce taxpayer-funded incentives to destroy these critical grassland resources. Most of the land that is being converted from native ecosystems to cropland is marginal, highly erodible, or prone to flooding. Bringing this marginally productive land into crop production provides little benefit to taxpayers, increases long-term costs due to erosion and nutrient loss, and ultimately leads to reduced water quality, less capacity to reduce flooding and the loss of valuable wildlife habitat. Sodsaver does not prohibit farmers from breaking out new land; it ensures that if they do, they do so at their own risk by partially reducing the cost to taxpayers. It is critical that sodsaver apply to the entire country. A regional approach, such as included in the House bill, is not adequate to protect our nation’s remaining native grasslands.

We thank you for your efforts to complete the 2013 Farm Bill, and we strongly urge you to support soil, water, and wildlife habitat conservation in the final bill by including a national sodsaver provision, re-linking basic conservation measures to eligibility for crop insurance premium subsidies, and opposing efforts to weaken existing wetland protections. Doing so will

save money and ensure long term farm productivity by protecting our nation's vital natural resources.

Signed,

National Groups:

American Bird Conservancy
American Farmland Trust
Amphibian Survival Alliance
Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
Bridging The Gap
Caribou Ecological
Center for Rural Affairs
Chicago Botanic Garden
Clean Water Action
Cornell Lab of Ornithology
Defenders of Wildlife
Delta Waterfowl
Ducks Unlimited
Ecological Society of America
Environmental and Energy Study Institute
Environmental Defense Fund
Environmental Working Group
Farm Bill Primer
Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future
National Association of Clean Water Agencies
National Audubon Society
National Bobwhite Conservation Initiative
National Bobwhite Technical Committee
National Center for Appropriate Technology
National Parks Conservation Association
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition
National Wildlife Federation
Natural Resources Defense Council
Nature Abounds
North American Falconers' Association
Pesticide Action Network
Pheasants Forever
Pollinator Partnership
Quail and Upland Wildlife Federation

Quail Forever
 SAVE THE FROGS!
 Soil and Water Conservation Society
 The Conservation Fund
 The Izaak Walton League of America
 The Nature Conservancy
 The Tortoise Reserve
 The Wildlife Society
 Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
 United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries
 Watchable Wildlife, Inc.
 Water Environment Federation
 Wildlife Management Institute
 World Wildlife Fund
 Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation

Regional Groups:

Alliance for the Great Lakes	Great Lakes Region
Appalachian Conservation Biology	East
Central Flyway Council	Central U.S.
Chapped Rapids Audubon Society	Northeastern WI and the Upper Peninsula of MI
Delmarva Ornithological Society	Delmarva Peninsula (Delaware, Maryland, Virginia)
Environmental Law & Policy Center of the Midwest	Midwest
Friends of the Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge	Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Vermont
Friends of the Upper Delaware River	Upper Delaware River
Great Lakes Environmental Law Center	Great Lakes Region
Gulf Restoration Network	Gulf of Mexico region: MS, LA, AL, FL, TX
Lake Champlain Committee	Vermont & New York (Lake Champlain watershed)
Midwest Environmental Advocates	Midwest
Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service	Upper Midwest (WI, MN, IA, IL, MI, ND, SD)
Mississippi River Cities & Towns Initiative	Mississippi River region
Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Working Group (NESAWG)	Northeast
Northern Great Plains Working Group	North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana
Northern Prairies Land Trust	South Dakota & Nebraska

Northwest Center for Alternatives to Pesticides	Northwest
Northwest Watershed Institute	Pacific Northwest
Ohio River Foundation	Ohio River Watershed
Ozark Regional Land Trust	Ozarks (Missouri, Arkansas)
Quail & Upland Game Alliance	Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky
Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory	Colorado, Great Plains/Rockies
The Wetlands Initiative	Midwest
The Wildlife Society-Central Mountains and Plains Section	Utah, Colorado, Wyoming, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas
Total Resource Management	Midwest
Western Sustainable Agriculture Working Group	Western U.S.

State and Local Groups

Arizona Wildlife Federation	Arizona
Northern Arizona Audubon Society	Arizona (northern)
Wild At Heart	Arizona
Arkansas Public Policy Panel	Arkansas
Arkansas Wildlife Federation	Arkansas
Enviroscapes Ecological Consulting	Arkansas
Audubon California	California
California Climate and Agriculture Network	California
Endangered Habitats League	California
Roots of Change	California
Slow Food California	California
Wild Farm Alliance	California
Audubon Society of Greater Denver	Colorado
Colorado Wildlife Federation	Colorado
Grand Valley Audubon Society	Colorado (Western)
Izaak Walton League of America, Pike's Peak Chapter	Colorado
Southern Plains Land Trust	Colorado
Audubon Connecticut	Connecticut
Florida Wildlife Federation	Florida
Izaak Walton League of America, Cypress Chapter	Florida
Izaak Walton League of America, Florida Division	Florida
Izaak Walton League of America, Florida	Florida

Keys Chapter	
South Florida Audubon Society	Florida (southern)
South Florida Wildlands	Florida
St. Johns River Alliance	Florida
Georgia Wildlife Federation	Georgia
Oconee Rivers Audubon Society	Georgia (Northeast)
Friends of Camas NWR	Idaho
Henry's Fork Chapter Idaho Master Naturalists	Idaho (Henry's Fork Watershed Area)
Intermountain Aquatics Inc.	Idaho
Pend Oreille Chapter of the Idaho Master Naturalists	Idaho (Panhandle area)
Snowdon Wildlife Sanctuary, Inc.	Idaho
Committee on the Middle Fork Vermilion River	Illinois
Garden Advisors	Illinois
Illinois Ornithological Society	Illinois
Illinois Stewardship Alliance	Illinois
Jo Daviess Conservation Foundation	Illinois
Prairie Rivers Network	Illinois
The Nature Institute	Illinois
Geist Fall Creek Watershed Alliance	Indiana
Hoosier Environmental Council	Indiana
Indiana Assoc. of Soil and Water Conservation Districts	Indiana
Indiana Chapter of The Wildlife Society	Indiana
Indiana Park & Recreation Association	Indiana
Indiana Wildlife Federation	Indiana
Save the Dunes	Indiana (Northwest)
Sycamore Land Trust, Incorporated	Indiana (southern)
Tippecanoe Audubon Society	Indiana
Citizens for a Healthy Iowa	Iowa
Des Moines Water Works	Iowa (Central)
Driftless Chapter of Trout Unlimited (Decorah)	Iowa
Iowa Bowhunters Association	Iowa
Iowa Chapter of the American Fisheries Society	Iowa
Iowa Environmental Council	Iowa
Iowa Farmers Union	Iowa
Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation	Iowa

Iowa Wildlife Federation	Iowa
Izaak Walton League of America, Maquoketa Valley Chapter	Iowa
North Bear Chapter of Trout Unlimited (Des Moines)	Iowa
Quad City Audubon Society	Iowa
Spring Creeks Chapter of Trout Unlimited (Iowa City)	Iowa
Trout Unlimited, Iowa Council	Iowa
Wagner Conservation Coalition	Iowa
Audubon of Kansas	Kansas
Kansas Rural Center	Kansas
Kansas Wildlife Federation	Kansas
Frankfort Audubon Society	Kentucky (central)
Kentucky Conservation Committee	Kentucky
Kentucky Waterways Alliance	Kentucky
The Wildlife Society, Kentucky Chapter	Kentucky
America's WETLAND Foundation	Louisiana
Atchafalaya Basinkeeper	Louisiana
Friends of Maine's Seabird Islands	Maine
Mt. Agamenticus to the Sea Conservation Initiative	Maine (southern)
Western Foothills Land Trust	Maine
Fox Haven Farm and Learning Center	Maryland
Gunpowder RIVERKEEPER	Maryland
Izaak Walton League of America- Maryland Mid-shore Chapter	Maryland
Izaak Walton League of America, Free State Chapter	Maryland
Maryland Ornithological Society	Maryland
Broad Brook Coalition	Massachusetts
Massachusetts Audubon Society	Massachusetts
Dwight Lydell Chapter, IWLA	Michigan
Garden Project	Michigan
Huron River Watershed Council	Michigan (southeast)
Lafayette Greens	Michigan
Michigan Farmers Union	Michigan
Michigan United Conservation Clubs	Michigan
Michigan Wildlife Conservancy & Michigan Wildlife Habitat Foundation	Michigan
Michigan Young Farmer Coalition	Michigan

Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council	Michigan
Brainerd Lakes Area Audubon Society	Minnesota (central)
Cannon River Watershed Partnership	Minnesota
Central Minnesota Audubon Society	Minnesota
Friends of the Mississippi River	Minnesota
Izaak Walton League of America, Cass County Chapter	Minnesota
Izaak Walton League of America, Jaques Chapter	Minnesota
Land Stewardship Project	Minnesota
Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy	Minnesota
Minnesota Conservation Federation	Minnesota
Minnesota Ornithologists' Union	Minnesota
Pioneer Heritage Conservation Trust	Minnesota (western)
W. J. McCabe Chapter of the Izaak Walton League of America	Minnesota (Duluth)
Mississippi River Trust	Mississippi
Mississippi Wildlife Federation	Mississippi
Wildlife Mississippi	Mississippi
Conservation Federation of Missouri	Missouri
EcoWorks Unlimited	Missouri
Missouri Coalition for the Environment	Missouri
Missouri Coalition for the Environment	Missouri
Missouri Farmers Union	Missouri
Missouri Parks Association	Missouri
Missouri Prairie Foundation	Missouri
Missouri Stream Team	Missouri
Missouri Stream Team 3762	Missouri
Ozark (Missouri) Council Trout Unlimited	Missouri
Social Services/Rural Life, CCCNM	Missouri
Montana Audubon	Montana
Montana Wildlife Federation	Montana
Audubon Society of Omaha	Nebraska
Izaak Walton League of America- Grand Island Chapter	Nebraska
Nebraska Chapter of the Wildlife Society	Nebraska
Nebraska Sustainable Agriculture Society INC-NSAS	Nebraska
Nebraska Wildlife Federation	Nebraska
Western Nebraska Resources Council	Nebraska

Bear-Paw Regional Greenways	New Hampshire
New Jersey Wildlife Society	New Jersey
Church Women United of New York State	New York
Buffalo Audubon Society	New York (western)
Eastern Long Island Audubon Society	New York (Long Island)
Save The River, the Upper St. Lawrence Riverkeeper	New York
Sisters of St. Joseph of Rochester Justice & Peace & Global Environment Committees	New York (Rochester)
The Wetland Trust	New York
Land Trust for the Little Tennessee	North Carolina
North Carolina Trout Unlimited Council	North Carolina
North Carolina Wildlife Federation	North Carolina
Resource Institute, Inc.	North Carolina
Browns Ranch	North Dakota
Izaak Walton League of America, Buckeye All-State Chapter	Ohio
Izaak Walton League of America, Headwaters Chapter	Ohio
Izaak Walton League of America, Wayne County Chapter	Ohio
Izaak Walton League of America, Western Reserve Chapter	Ohio
Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association	Ohio
Ohio Environmental Council	Ohio
Ohio Farmers Union	Ohio
Ohio Spider Society	Ohio
Ohio Wetlands Association	Ohio
Shaker Lakes Garden Club	Ohio
Silvertip Productions, Ltd	Ohio
Izaak Walton League - Oregon Division	Oregon
Izaak Walton League - Silverton Chapter	Oregon
Izaak Walton League of America, Mary's Peak Chapter	Oregon
Kalmiopsis Audubon Society	Oregon
Lane County Audubon Society	Oregon
Oregon Tilth	Oregon
Salem Audubon Society	Oregon
Ecological Associates	Pennsylvania
Lake Erie Region Conservancy	Pennsylvania
Lehigh Valley Audubon Society	Pennsylvania

PennFuture	Pennsylvania
Pennsylvania Chapter of The Wildlife Society	Pennsylvania
Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs	Pennsylvania
East Greenwich Municipal Land Trust	Rhode Island
Coastal Conservation League	South Carolina
Hilton Pond Center for Piedmont Natural History	South Carolina
South Carolina Wildlife Federation	South Carolina
Black Hills Sportsmen Club	South Dakota
Delta Waterfowl, the Sioux Falls, SD Chapter	South Dakota
High Plains Wildlife Association	South Dakota (central area)
Huron(SD) Puddle Jumpers Chapter of Delta Waterfowl	South Dakota (Huron)
Izaak Walton League of America, Rapid City Chapter	South Dakota
Living River Group- Sierra Club	South Dakota
Northern South Dakota Chapter of Pheasants Forever	South Dakota
South Dakota Agriculture Conservation Coalition	South Dakota
South Dakota Chapter of the Sierra Club	South Dakota
South Dakota Chapter of The Wildlife Society	South Dakota
South Dakota Farmers Union	South Dakota
South Dakota Grassland Coalition	South Dakota
South Dakota Wildlife Federation	South Dakota
Tennessee Clean Water Network	Tennessee
Tennessee Ornithological Society	Tennessee
Audubon Dallas	Texas (Dallas)
Houston Audubon Society	Texas
Texas Conservation Alliance	Texas
Citizens for a Fort Monroe National Park	Virginia
Fredericksburg-Rappahannock Chapter of the Izaak Walton League of America	Virginia (Spotsylvania/Fredericksburg Area)
Shenandoah Valley Network	Virginia (Shenandoah Valley)
U.S. Trail Riders	Virginia
Virginia Association for Biological Farming	Virginia
Virginia Conservation Network	Virginia
Virginia Food Works	Virginia

North Cascades Audubon Society	Washington
Washington Sustainable Food & Farming Network	Washington
Izaak Walton League of America, Mountaineer Chapter	West Virginia
West Virginia Highlands Conservancy	West Virginia
Michael Fields Agricultural Institute	Wisconsin
Milwaukee Riverkeeper	Wisconsin
Wisconsin Land and Water Conservation Association, Inc.	Wisconsin
Wisconsin Society for Ornithology	Wisconsin
Wisconsin Soil and Water Conservation Society	Wisconsin
Wisconsin Wildlife Federation	Wisconsin
Wyoming Chapter of the Wildlife Society	Wyoming
Wyoming Outdoor Council	Wyoming