

January 18, 2018

The Honorable Pat Roberts
Chairman, Senate Committee on
Agriculture, Nutrition, & Forestry

The Honorable K. Michael Conaway
Chairman, House Committee on
Agriculture

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
Ranking Member, Senate Committee on
Agriculture, Nutrition, & Forestry

The Honorable Collin Peterson
Ranking Member, House Committee on
Agriculture

Dear Chairmen Roberts and Conaway and Ranking Members Stabenow and Peterson,

We the undersigned conservation, wildlife, sportsmen, scientific, landowner, taxpayer, and agriculture organizations, representing millions of members across the country, strongly support the American Prairie Conservation Act (S. 1913, H.R. 3939), introduced on Wednesday, October 4th by Senators Thune (R-SD), Klobuchar (D-MN), Rounds (R-SD), and Bennet (D-CO) and Representatives Noem (R-SD) and Walz (D-MN).

The bipartisan, bicameral American Prairies Conservation Act would enact a nationwide “Sodsaver” protection to reduce taxpayer-funded incentives to convert critical grassland resources to cropland.

The 2014 Farm Bill included a Sodsaver provision that reduces crop insurance premium subsidies on newly broken native sod, ensuring that taxpayer dollars do not create incentives for more native prairie land to be plowed under. Most of the land that is currently being converted from native ecosystems to cropland is marginal, highly erodible, or prone to flooding. These environmentally sensitive lands provide critical ecological services, including habitat for grassland-dependent wildlife species, flood mitigation, erosion control, water filtration, and other ecological benefits. In addition to providing ecosystem services, native grasslands are a critical resource for American ranchers.

While the Sodsaver provision was an important step forward in protecting native prairie in 2014, it is currently only applied to the six states in the Prairie Pothole Region, leaving native grasslands in the rest of the country without this much-needed protection.

The American Prairies Conservation Act will slow the conversion of native grasslands to cropland by extending the Sodsaver provision to the entire country, thereby reducing premium subsidies by 50 percentage points on acres that are broken from native sod. Sodsaver also includes two important components that prevent gaming of the system to increase revenue insurance coverage. One keeps newly broken sod isolated from other crop acres when calculating insurable yields. The other requires insurance to be based on the county average yield until there is a multi-year yield history for the converted land. The bill also requires that USDA track and report annually on the conversion of native prairie to cropland, giving taxpayers better information on the ongoing loss of grassland.

The undersigned organizations applaud Senators Thune, Klobuchar, Rounds, and Bennet and Representatives Noem and Walz for their leadership in preserving grazing land, ranching opportunities, and critical wildlife habitat and other natural resources through the American Prairies Conservation Act. We strongly urge you to include this provision in the 2018 Farm Bill.

Sincerely,

National Groups:

Aerulean Plant Identification Systems, Inc.
American Bird Conservancy
American Birding Association
ArcherAdvantage
Bird Conservation Network
Bluestem Communications
Center for Rural Affairs
Clean Water Action
Community Food and Justice Coalition
Conservation Imaging, Inc.
Defenders of Wildlife
Earthjustice
ECOAN
Endangered Species Coalition
Environment America
Environmental Working Group
Food Animal Concerns Trust
GreenLatinos
Hip Hop Caucus
International Bird Rescue
Izaak Walton League of America
Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future
League of Conservation Voters
National Audubon Society
National Bobwhite Conservation Initiative
National Center for Appropriate Technology
National Farmers Union
National Latino Farmers & Ranchers Trade Association
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition
National Wildlife Federation
Natural Resources Defense Council
North American Falconers Association
North American Grouse Partnership
Pollinator Partnership
Prairies Forever
River Network

R Street Institute
 Rural & Agriculture Council of America
 Soil and Water Conservation Society
 Taxpayers for Common Sense
 The Bee & Butterfly Habitat Fund
 The Land Improvement Contractors of America
 The Nature Conservancy
 The Ohio State University
 The Wildlife Society
 The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation
 Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
 Union of Concerned Scientists
 U.S. Public Interest Research Group
 Watchable Wildlife, Inc.
 Wild Farm Alliance
 Women, Food and Agriculture Network
 World Wildlife Fund

Regional Groups:	Region:
Burroughs Audubon Society of Greater Kansas City	Greater Kansas City (KS, MO)
Delmarva Ornithological Society	Delmarva Peninsula (DE, MD, VA)
Environmental Law & Policy Center	Midwest
Gulf Restoration Network	Gulf Region
Kansas City Native Plant Initiative	Greater Kansas City (KS, MO)
NatureCITE	Midwest
Northwest Section of The Wildlife Society	Northwest
Operation Migration USA	WI, IL, IN, KY, TN, GA, AL, FL
Ozark Regional Land Trust	Ozarks Region (MO, AR)
Platte Land Trust	Greater Kansas City (KS, MO)
Prairie Fire Tours	Northern Great Plains
Quad City Audubon Society	Quad Cities (Southeast IA, West Central IL)
Save The River / Upper St. Lawrence Riverkeeper	St. Lawrence River
Southeastern Grasslands Initiative	Southeast
Southeast Section of The Wildlife Society	Southeast
Western Landowners Association	West
State and Local Groups:	Region:
Wild At Heart	Arizona
Arkansas Wildlife Federation	Arkansas
California Bay Area Chapter of The Wildlife	California - Bay Area

Society, Conservation Affairs Committee	
Endangered Habitats League	California (southern)
Malibu Monarch Project	California
Natural Heritage Institute	California
Pesticide Action Network	California
Audubon Society of Greater Denver	Colorado - Denver
Colorado Chapter of The Wildlife Society	Colorado
Cypress Chapter, Florida, Izaak Walton League of America	Florida
Florida Division, Izaak Walton League of America	Florida
Florida Keys Chapter, Izaak Walton League of America	Florida - Florida Keys
Florida Wildlife Federation	Florida
Center for Family Farm Development, Inc.	Georgia
Idaho Wildlife Federation	Idaho
Jo Daviess Conservation Foundation	Illinois
Chicago Audubon Society	Illinois (northeastern)
Illinois Chapter of The Wildlife Society	Illinois
Illinois Council of Trout Unlimited	Illinois
Illinois Division, Izaak Walton League Of America	Illinois
Illinois Stewardship Alliance	Illinois
Prairie Rivers Network	Illinois
Indiana Division, Izaak Walton League of America	Indiana
1000 Friends of Iowa	Iowa
Iowa Wildlife Federation	Iowa
Kansas Chapter of The Wildlife Society	Kansas
Kansas Rural Center	Kansas
Kansas Wildlife Federation	Kansas
Envision Franklin County	Kentucky - Franklin County
Kentucky Waterways Alliance	Kentucky
Maryland Ornithological Society	Maryland
The Monarch Alliance	Maryland
Michigan Audubon	Michigan
Michigan Wildlife Conservancy	Michigan
Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council	Michigan
Wild Ones, Kalamazoo Chapter	Michigan (southwest)
Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis	Minnesota
Cass County, MN Chapter, Izaak Walton League of America	Minnesota - Cass County Chapter

Central Minnesota Audubon Society	Minnesota (central)
Friends of the Mississippi River	Minnesota
Grow Monarch Habitat	Minnesota - Minneapolis
Land Stewardship Project	Minnesota
Minnesota Chapter of the Wildlife Society	Minnesota
Minnesota Conservation Federation	Minnesota
Minnesota Division, Izaak Walton League of America	Minnesota
Minnesota Prairie Chicken Society	Minnesota
Minnesota Sharp-tailed Grouse Society	Minnesota
W.J. McCabe (Duluth) Chapter, Izaak Walton League of America	Minnesota - Duluth
Walter Breckenridge Chapter, Izaak Walton League	Minnesota - Brooklyn Park
Wes Libbey Northern Lakes Chapter	Minnesota
Barker Horticultural Services LLC	Missouri
Conservation Federation of Missouri	Missouri
Missouri Coalition for the Environment	Missouri
Missouri Prairie Foundation	Missouri
Missouri River Bird Observatory	Missouri
Missouri Wildflowers Nursery	Missouri
Native Landscape Solutions, Inc	Missouri
St. Louis Audubon Society	Missouri - Greater St. Louis Area
Wild Ones, St. Louis Chapter	Missouri - St. Louis
Montana Wildlife Federation	Montana
Nebraska Chapter of The Wildlife Society	Nebraska
Nebraska Chapter Sierra Club	Nebraska
The Passaic River Coalition	New Jersey (northern)
Audubon New Mexico	New Mexico
Central New York Chapter, Izaak Walton League of America	New York State (central)
Wild Birds Unlimited of Syosset	New York - Syosset
North Dakota Birding Society	North Dakota
North Dakota Wildlife Federation	North Dakota
Central Ohio Chapter, Izaak Walton League of America	Ohio (central)
Headwaters, Ohio Chapter, Izaak Walton League of America	Ohio - Headwaters
Lorain County Ely Chapter	Ohio
Monroeville, Ohio, Izaak Walton League of	Ohio - Monroeville

America	
Ohio Division, Izaak Walton League of America	Ohio
Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association	Ohio
Western Reserve, Ohio Chapter Izaak Walton League of America	Ohio - Western Reserve
Oregon Chapter of The Wildlife Society	Oregon
Oregon Environmental Council	Oregon
Salem Audubon Society	Oregon
Juniata Valley Audubon Society	Pennsylvania
Sociedad Ornitológica Puertorriqueña Inc.	Puerto Rico
Beadle County, SD Chapter, Izaak Walton League of America	South Dakota - Beadle County
Dakota Rural Action	South Dakota
Prairie Hills SD Audubon Society	South Dakota
Rapid City, SD Chapter, Izaak Walton League of America	South Dakota - Rapid City
Sioux Falls, SD Chapter, Izaak Walton League of America	South Dakota - Sioux Falls
South Dakota Wildlife Federation	South Dakota
Cumberland-Harpeth Audubon Society	Tennessee
Harpeth Conservancy	Tennessee
Tennessee Clean Water Network	Tennessee
Tennessee Ornithological Society	Tennessee
Tennessee Wildlife Federation	Tennessee
Coastal Prairie Partnership	Texas
Houston Audubon	Texas - Houston
Native Prairies Association of Texas	Texas
Texas Conservation Alliance	Texas
Texas Hawking Association	Texas
Vermont Center for Ecostudies	Vermont
Arlington-Fairfax, VA Chapter, Izaak Walton League of America	Virginia - Arlington-Fairfax
Fredericksburg-Rappahannock, VA Chapter, Izaak Walton League of America	Virginia - Fredericksburg
Suffolk-Nansemond, VA Chapter, Izaak Walton League of America	Virginia - Suffolk
Virginia Association for Biological Farming	Virginia
Virginia Chapter of The Wildlife Society	Virginia
Virginia Division, Izaak Walton League of America	Virginia
Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition	West Virginia

Jefferson County, WV Chapter, Izaak Walton League of America	West Virginia
Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin	Wisconsin
Watertown, Wisconsin Chapter, Izaak Walton League of America	Wisconsin - Watertown
Wisconsin Wildlife Federation	Wisconsin

Cc: Members of the Senate and House Committees on Agriculture