



April 17, 2018

The Honorable K. Michael Conaway
United States House of Representatives
Chairman, House Committee on Agriculture
1301 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Collin Peterson
United States House of Representatives
Ranking Member, House Committee on Agriculture
1301 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Conaway and Ranking Member Peterson,

The National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) represents America's 3,000 conservation districts and the 17,000 locally-elected men and women who serve on their governing boards. Districts work with millions of cooperating landowners and operators to help them manage and protect land and water resources on all private lands and many public lands in the United States.

We want to thank you and members of the committee for all the hard work that went into writing this farm bill. The sheer number of hearings both in Washington, D.C., and across the country seeking input from stakeholders is a testament to your dedication. Historically, the farm bill process has been bipartisan and NACD hopes as the bill moves through the legislative process that both sides of the aisle can come together to pass a bill.

We also want to thank the committee for incorporating many of NACD's priorities for the farm bill in this legislation, including:

- An increase in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) cap achieved in such a manner that does not cut other conservation programs; allowing more grazing opportunities through CRP including allowing grazing as a mid-contract management practice; and allowing natural disasters to substitute for mid-contract management.
- Making reasonable reforms to the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) without drastically increasing funding for the program or converting part of the program to a grant program while no longer having the program rely on working lands programs for its funding.
- Making a historic funding commitment to the Watershed Program, an important infrastructure program that helps prevent flooding and helps meet water quality and erosion control resource concerns.



National Association of Conservation Districts

- Repealing the System for Award Management and Data Universal Numbering System (SAM/DUNS) requirements for the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) so there are no additional regulatory hurdles on farmers and ranchers attempting to put conservation practices on their land.
- Continuing the link between crop insurance and conservation compliance.
- Expanding eligibility for acequias in the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) to ensure these unique irrigation systems can continue to provide conservation benefits to low income, minority, and underserved farmers.

The need for investments in conservation programs is greater than ever before. As a conservation organization dedicated to helping private landowners put more conservation practices on the ground, we want to work with the committee to ensure the conservation title has robust financial and technical assistance, which is the lifeblood of the voluntary conservation mission. We recognize the challenging budgetary constraints the committee faces in reauthorizing the farm bill, and we look forward to working with the committee to increase conservation funding wherever possible.

We also want to continue working with the committee to ensure that the identity, purpose and funding for CSP and EQIP are maintained. NACD supports many of the improvements the committee has made in the combined program—such as allowing partial farm/operation enrollments, allowing more local input in deciding priority resource concerns, and an overall simplification of the program.

NACD once again appreciates the inclusion of many of our members' priorities into this legislation and we look forward to working in a bipartisan and bicameral manner going forward to support the voluntary, locally-led, incentive-based conservation model that farmers and ranchers trust.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brent Van Dyke".

Brent Van Dyke
President, NACD

CC: Members of the House Committee on Agriculture