

March 29, 2024

The Honorable Martin Heinrich  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Agriculture,  
Rural Development, FDA, & Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. Senate  
Washington DC 20510

The Honorable John Hoeven  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Agriculture,  
Rural Development, FDA, & Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. Senate  
Washington DC 20510

The Honorable Andy Harris  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Agriculture,  
Rural Development, FDA, & Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Sanford Bishop Jr.  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Agriculture,  
Rural Development, FDA, & Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Heinrich, Chairman Harris, Ranking Member Hoeven, and Ranking Member Bishop:

The undersigned organizations request that you provide at least \$1.2 billion for Conservation Operations within the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Fiscal Year 2025 (FY 2025). This funding is critical to the effective administration of USDA conservation programs and provides essential tools to help farmers, ranchers, and private landowners across the country voluntarily implement effective conservation practices.

Conservation Operations funding primarily supports Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA), which facilitates the administration of USDA conservation programs by supporting our conservation workforce, conservation planning, and the extension of specialized technical assistance to producers. Providing strong funding for CTA is now more important than ever as NRCS and partners work to administer historic investments in voluntary conservation programs. Our country's conservation delivery system and producers across the country depend on the availability of on-the-ground technical assistance to implement effective conservation practices. Conservation Operations funding also supports NRCS soil surveys, snow surveys, water supply forecasting, and plant materials centers. These provide important information and tools to help producers monitor and manage their land more effectively.

We also request that FY 2025 appropriations legislation maintains full authorized funding for farm bill conservation programs. Voluntary, incentive-based, and locally led USDA conservation programs enjoy bipartisan support in Congress and are utilized by producers of all kinds across the United States to adopt conservation practices on their operations that enhance water quality, increase resilience, and reduce harmful emissions. Demand for these programs, including the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and Conservation Stewardship Program

(CSP), exceeds available dollars by a wide margin. While recent investments have allowed more producers than ever to access conservation programs, current application backlogs remain significant. It is critical that FY 2025 appropriations legislation maintains full authorized funding to help more producers voluntarily implement conservation on their lands.

As your subcommittee develops the FY 2025 appropriations bill, we urge you to provide at least \$1.2 billion in discretionary funding for NRCS Conservation Operations and to reject any changes in mandatory spending for farm bill conservation programs. We appreciate your attention to our request and look forward to working with you to support conservation and our nation's producers.

Sincerely,

National Association of Conservation Districts  
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition  
American Bird Conservancy  
American Farmland Trust  
American Rivers  
American Society of Agronomy  
American Soybean Association  
Amphibian and Reptile Conservancy  
Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies  
Bozeman Birders  
California Climate Agriculture Network  
California FarmLink  
Carbon180  
Carolina Farm Stewardship Association  
Certified Naturally Grown  
Clean Wisconsin  
Cleveland and Cuyahoga County Food Policy Coalition  
Climate Land Leaders  
Crop Science Society of America  
Cultivate Kansas City  
Dakota Rural Action  
Defenders of Wildlife  
Dietrick Institute for Applied Insect Ecology  
Ducks Unlimited  
Earthjustice  
Environmental Defense Fund  
Environmental Law & Policy Center  
Farm Aid  
Farm to Table - New Mexico  
Food Animal Concerns Trust  
Friends of the Mississippi River  
Illinois Stewardship Alliance  
Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy  
International Certified Crop Advisor Program  
Izaak Walton League of America

Jóia Food & Fiber Farm  
La Semilla Food Center  
Lake Pepin Legacy Alliance  
Land Core  
Land For Good  
Land Stewardship Project  
Latino Farmers & Ranchers International, Inc.  
Maine Farmland Trust  
Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association  
Michigan Food and Farming Systems  
Midwest Cover Crops Council  
Mississippi River Network  
Missouri Coalition for the Environment  
National Association of Resource Conservation and Development Councils  
National Corn Growers Association  
National Farmers Union  
National Sustainable Agriculture Network  
National Wildlife Federation  
National Young Farmers Coalition  
New Mexico Food & Agriculture Policy Council  
Northeast Organic Farming Association Massachusetts  
Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont  
Oregon Climate and Agriculture Network  
Organic Farming Research Foundation  
Pesticide Action Network  
Pheasants Forever  
Pollinator Partnership  
Quail Forever  
Resource Renewal Institute  
Rhode Island Food Policy Council  
River Network  
Rural Advancement Foundation International  
Rural Coalition  
Soil and Water Conservation Society  
Soil Science Society of America  
Southeastern Massachusetts Agricultural Partnership  
Sprout  
The Conservation Fund  
The Nature Conservancy  
The Wetlands Initiative  
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership  
Trust for Public Land  
USA Rice  
Virginia Association for Biological Farming  
Western Landowners Alliance  
Women, Food and Agriculture Network  
World Farmers  
World Wildlife Fund  
Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation