June 23, 2022

Dear Members of Congress:

The undersigned organizations, representing millions of people across the country who care about clean water, write to urge you to protect our nation’s water supplies through robust and effective support for conservation programs and policies as you are writing the 2023 Farm Bill. The next Farm Bill should further efforts to reduce the threat nutrient pollution poses to clean water and ensure farmers and ranchers have the tools they need to be leading stewards of our shared water resources.

Conservation systems can go a long way toward protecting our water sources, and Farm Bill conservation programs offer an opportunity to give producers the financial and technical assistance needed to put those systems in place. Cover crops, conservation tillage, buffer strips, manure and livestock management, wetland restoration, integrated pest management and conservation crop rotations are just a few examples of water-friendly practices that can help protect water at the source, usually at a lower cost than that incurred by downstream communities to make polluted water safe for drinking, commerce, wildlife, and recreation. Many of these practices have co-benefits to soil health, public health, and more. They can stimulate rural economies and increase the resilience of supply chains. We ask that as you consider the next Farm Bill, you support the following priorities for a water-friendly 2023 Farm Bill:

**Prioritize Water Quality Outcomes**: Considering the huge role USDA plays in many of our diverse watersheds plagued by nutrient pollution issues across the country, we need their programs to operationalize water quality as a key part of the model of success. Measuring outcomes instead of just acres of practices allows for more cost-efficient programs and greater environmental benefits in the form of cleaner aquatic resources and more opportunities for recreation. One way to do this is the creation of a Clean Water Outcomes Matching Program within the Regional Conservation Partnership Program that would provide incentive to states to adopt outcomes-based water quality funds. Integrating an outcomes approach into current USDA conservation programs will lead to real watershed improvements as farmers and ranchers measure tangible outcomes that will inform the effectiveness of the best management practices already in place.

**Modernize Crop Insurance**: The Federal Crop Insurance Program (FCIP) should be modernized to protect water quality and promote more diverse and sustainable cropping systems. This shift could help prepare farmers for the impacts of a changing climate, like drought and flooding, which in turn drive up costs of the program at taxpayers’ expense. We support improvements to the crop insurance program that can transition the FCIP into a real risk management strategy in a changing climate, including a good stewardship discount for farmers who use good soil health practices, expansion of Sodsaver to protect grasslands in all states,
robust support for the Whole-Farm Revenue Protection program, and increased technical assistance for and stronger enforcement of conservation compliance to protect wetlands and improve conservation on highly-erodible land.

**Limit CAFO Funding:** While many family farmers and ranchers aspire to be stewards of the environment, much of the pollution in our waterways comes from large industrial animal operations—many of which are foreign-owned—that in no way resemble traditional farms or ranches. These operations recklessly release vast volumes of waste that pollute our air and waterways and cause sickness and sometimes death in surrounding communities, who are disproportionately low-income and people of color. We recommend removing the 50% EQIP designation for livestock, as much of these funds currently go to industrial animal operations and subsidize environmentally harmful practices. Federal funding should instead be redirected towards a variety of regenerative, soil-, water-quality-, equity-, and climate- based farm and ranch practices that protect water, air, soil, and community health.

**Double Conservation Spending:** Farm Bill conservation programs are the largest source of conservation funding on private lands, yet demand for conservation on 13.8 million acres goes unmet because of inadequate funding every year. For major working lands programs like CSP and EQIP, this means up to 75% of applications have gone unfunded in recent years. To meet this need, the next Farm Bill should double conservation funding to improve water quality through reduced soil erosion, reduced nitrogen and phosphorus pollution to waterways, and to improve water efficiency in dry climates, as well as providing co-benefits for climate mitigation, climate resilience, soil health, and wildlife habitat.

In addition to these priorities, we urge you to reject any attempts to add anti-environmental provisions to the Farm Bill and to prioritize the needs of historically underserved producers. Farmers and ranchers want to improve the environment; they want to leave their land and water better for the next generation. To do so, they need Farm Bill programs that invest in their abilities to steward and improve our shared water resources. Because we *all* need clean water.

Sincerely,

Alabama Rivers Alliance

Alliance for the Great Lakes

Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments

American Sustainable Business Network

Anthropocene Alliance
Avocado Green
Black Women's Health Imperative
Clean Water Action
Connecticut River Conservancy
Earthjustice
Endangered Habitats League
Environment America
Environmental Law & Policy Center
Environmental Policy Innovation Center
For Love of Water (FLOW)
Freshwater Future
Friends of the Cheat
Friends of the Mississippi River
Green State Solutions
GreenLatinos
Harpeth Conservancy
Healthy Gulf
Illinois Council of Trout Unlimited
Lake Pepin Legacy Alliance
League of Conservation Voters
League of Women Voters of Iowa
Manitou Creek Watershed Alliance
Mill Creek Alliance
Mississippi River Collaborative
National Latino Farmers & Ranchers Trade Association
National Parks Conservation Association
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition
National Wildlife Federation
Natural Heritage Institute
Natural Resources Defense Council
Naturepedic Organic Mattresses
New Jersey Sustainable Business Council
Ocean River Institute
Ohio Environmental Council
Pennsylvania Council of Churches
River Alliance of Wisconsin
River Network
Rural Coalition
Sierra Club
Southern Environmental Law Center
Surfrider Foundation
The Marlow Collective
Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council
U.S. PIRG
Walk Your Talk Productions
Waterkeeper Alliance
Waterkeepers Chesapeake

Waterway Advocates

Wisconsin's Green Fire, Inc.

Yadkin Riverkeeper