

February 23, 2007

American Forest Foundation · American Sportfishing Association · American Tree Farm System  
Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies · Bear Trust International  
Berkeley Conservation Institute · Boone and Crockett Club  
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation · Ducks Unlimited  
Environmental and Energy Study Institute · Federation of Fly Fishers  
International Hunter Education Association · Izaak Walton League of America  
Land Trust Alliance · Mule Deer Foundation · National Association of State Foresters  
Natural Resources Trust · National Shooting Sports Foundation  
National Wild Turkey Federation · National Wildlife Federation  
North American Grouse Partnership · Northwest Sportfishing Industry Association  
Quail Unlimited · Quail Forever · Quality Deer Management Association  
Pheasants Forever · Pinchot Institute · Pope and Young Club  
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation · Ruffed Grouse Society · Safari Club International  
Southern Group of State Foresters · Society of American Foresters  
Texas Wildlife Association · The Nature Conservancy · The Wildlife Society  
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership · Trout Unlimited  
Wildlife Management Institute · Wildlife Forever

The Honorable Kent Conrad, Chairman  
Senate Committee on the Budget  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Judd Gregg, Ranking Member  
Senate Committee on the Budget  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Conrad and Senator Gregg:

The organizations reflected on this letter represent millions of private landowners, hunters, anglers, foresters and other conservationists who recognize and embrace the Farm Bill as the single most significant program delivering on-the-ground conservation benefits for private landowners and natural resources. We likewise find significant merit in the full suite of Farm Bill programs that assist in keeping working farmers, ranchers and forest landowners on the land. All citizens benefit from the contributions of the Farm Bill to secure food, fiber and natural resources conservation. These benefits have been provided in a fiscally sound manner. To date, these Farm Bill programs have spent \$26 billion less than what was projected to be spent at passage in 2002. As you prepare your budget resolution for FY 2008, we respectfully request that you give consideration to providing adequate resources to the agriculture baseline so the Agriculture Committee can continue these important programs and meet new needs as well.

In particular, our organizations respectfully request your serious consideration of providing additional funds above the January CBO baseline so the Agriculture Committee can meet this country's conservation, forestry, research, and renewable energy priorities and goals. We believe it is important to fund such priorities as the next generation of sustainable renewable energy from cellulosic sources while also continuing to provide fish and wildlife, water, and soil conservation benefits to our citizens. Significant national issues and challenges can be best addressed by the landscape level programs delivered in the Farm Bill. The challenges of wetland conservation; invasive species; aquatic systems health; forest health; energy security and the move to bio-fuels; alteration of native habitats; maintaining working families on the land; and even the consequences yet uncertain of global climate change will all benefit from more robust funding.

Our interest in the portfolio of conservation programs in the Farm Bill is reflected by the popularity of these programs, all of which are oversubscribed. U.S. Department of Agriculture records substantiate that for enrollment through the Natural Resource Conservation Service's conservation programs alone, more than \$2.5 billion of requests in 2005 were unfulfilled because of lack of funds for either program financial assistance or the technical assistance to deliver the programs on the ground. We believe these numbers clearly tell the story of the potential opportunities that could and should be realized with more funding.

We sincerely appreciate your interest in and consideration of our request, and we look forward to continuing to work with the Committee and the Congress to enact a Farm Bill that truly meets our nation's need and benefits our citizens.

Cc:

The Honorable Harry Reid, Majority Leader

The Honorable Mitch McConnell, Minority Leader

The Honorable Tom Harkin, Chairman, Agriculture Committee

The Honorable Saxby Chambliss, Ranking Member, Agriculture Committee

Senate Budget Committees Members

Senate Agriculture Committees Members