

August 4, 2021

The Honorable Chuck Schumer, Majority Leader
United States Senate

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the House
United States House of Representatives

Dear Leader Schumer and Speaker Pelosi,

Thank you for your ongoing efforts to ensure that agriculture is part of the solution to climate change. As you consider the role of agriculture in the infrastructure conversations in Congress, the undersigned groups urge you to support a robust investment into USDA agriculture conservation programs and conservation technical assistance in the budget reconciliation package.

We were pleased to see that President Biden's American Jobs Plan places a priority on "positioning the U.S. agricultural sector to lead the shift to net-zero emissions while providing new economic opportunities for farmers." Increasing funding for USDA's popular and effective Farm Bill conservation programs is one of the quickest and most practical ways to directly equip farmers and ranchers, energize rural economies, improve climate resilience, and ensure that agriculture is part of the solution to climate change. The full suite of voluntary, incentive-based conservation programs administered by USDA enables farmers, ranchers, and forest owners to adopt practices that build soil health, sequester carbon, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, while also improving surface and ground water quality, increasing water efficiency, and creating habitat for fish and wildlife.

Unfortunately, however, Farm Bill conservation programs are routinely oversubscribed. Demand for conservation on 13.8 million acres goes unmet because of inadequate funding every year. Additionally, our current programs meet only a fraction of the need for voluntary conservation on the landscape. That's why we are urging Congress to double the investment in Farm Bill conservation programs and to ramp up conservation technical assistance funding in a corresponding manner. As funds for conservation programs increase, it is vital for conservation technical assistance to keep pace. This assistance is essential for the delivery of conservation funding and provides on the ground support for farmers, ranchers, and forest owners as they adopt conservation practices on their lands.

Increasing baseline funding for the Farm Bill conservation programs and ramping up conservation technical assistance on the ground will enable landowners to mitigate the impacts of drought and flood, improve habitat, improve soil health and long-term food security, create new job opportunities for rural economies, and galvanize the agriculture sector to lead the charge in our fight against climate change. We believe farmers, ranchers, and foresters are ready to move agriculture toward net zero emissions if they are provided the tools and resources to make that goal a reality. Action this year on the climate and infrastructure bill represents the best opportunity in decades to meet farmer demand for conservation programs.

We look forward to working with you to build out these priorities that will energize the American economy and put Americans back to work.

Sincerely,

National Groups and Companies:

American Farmland Trust
American Fisheries Society
American Grassfed Association
American Woodcock Society
Appalachian Trail Conservancy
Association of State Floodplain Managers
Bee Girl Organization
Carbon180
Center for Rural Affairs
Defenders of Wildlife
Delta Waterfowl
E2 (Environmental Entrepreneurs)
Earth Force
Earthjustice
Environmental Defense Fund
Environmental Working Group
Ernst Conservation Seeds
Food Animal Concerns Trust
Food Democracy Now!
Hazon
Influence Advocacy, LLC
Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy
Izaak Walton League of America
Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future
Land Trust Alliance
League of Conservation Voters
National Association of Conservation Districts
National Audubon Society
National Bobwhite Conservation Initiative
National Center for Appropriate Technology
National Deer Association
National Farmers Union

National Organic Coalition
National Parks Conservation Association
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition
National Wildlife Federation
National Young Farmers Coalition
Natural Resources Defense Council
NatureServe
North American Grouse Partnership
Organic Farmers Association
Organic Farming Research Foundation
Pesticide Action Network
Pollinator Partnership
Rachel Carson Council
River Network
Ruffed Grouse Society
Rural Coalition
Sierra Club
Slow Food USA
Soil and Water Conservation Society
Sustainable Monarch
The Breakthrough Institute
The Conservation Fund
The Nature Conservancy
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation
Partnership
Trout Unlimited
Union of Concerned Scientists
Western Landowners Alliance
Wild Farm Alliance
Wildlife Management Institute
World Wildlife Fund
Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation

Regional, State and Local Groups:

Alliance for the Great Lakes
Altamaha Riverkeeper (Georgia)
Arkansas Wildlife Federation
Atlanta Coyote Project
Beaverdam Creek Watershed Watch Group (Maryland)
Bird Conservancy of the Rockies
Blue Ridge Land Conservancy
Breathe Project
California Climate and Agriculture Network
California Farmers Union
California Waterfowl Association
Capital Region Land Conservancy
Carolina Farm Stewardship Association
Chemung Valley Audubon Society (New York)
Chesapeake Bay Foundation
Chesapeake Conservancy
Chesapeake Legal Alliance
Chesapeake Wildlife Heritage
Clean Fairfax
Clean Water Linganore, Inc. (Maryland)
Climate Land Leaders
Climate Reality Project Susquehanna Valley PA Chapter
Coastal Enterprises, LLC
Colorado Wildlife Federation
Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture (CISA)
Conservation Coalition of Oklahoma
Conservation Resource Alliance (Michigan)
Coosa River Basin Initiative
Cypress Chapter Inc. of the Izaak Walton League of America
Delaware Nature Society
Delaware Valley Ornithological Club
Environmental Law & Policy Center
Farm to Table – New Mexico
Florida Division of the Izaak Walton League of America
Florida Keys Chapter of the Izaak Walton League of America
Florida Wildlife Federation, Inc.
Food and Agriculture Committee, Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter
Foodshed Capital
Forever Maryland
Friends of Family Farmers (Oregon)
Friends of the Mississippi River
Gallatin Valley Land Trust
Georgia Wildlife Federation
Goose Creek Association
Grassland Groupies (Kansas)
Grassworks (Wisconsin)
Green State Solutions (Iowa)
Harpeth Conservancy
Hawaii Farmers Union United
Hawk Mountain Sanctuary Association
Healthy Gulf
Heart of the Rockies Initiative
Idaho Wildlife Federation
Illinois Council of Trout Unlimited
Illinois Division, Izaak Walton League
Illinois Stewardship Alliance
Indiana Division, Izaak Walton League of America
Indiana Sportsmens Roundtable
Indiana Wildlife Federation
Iowa Environmental Council
Iowa Wildlife Federation
Island Grown Initiative
Izaak Walton League of America - Geneseo Chapter (IL)
Izaak Walton League of America – Grand Island (NE)
Izaak Walton League of America- Oregon Division
Kalmiopsis Audubon Society (OR)
Kansas Farmers Union
Kansas Wildlife Federation
Lancaster Clean Water Partners
Lancaster Farmland Trust
Land For Good
Land Stewardship Project (Minnesota)
Louisiana Hypoxia Working Group
Louisiana Wildlife Federation
Lower Susquehanna Riverkeeper Association
Maine Farmland Trust
Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association
Maryland Bird Conservation Partnership
Maryland Ornithological Society
Mass Audubon
Michael Fields Agricultural Institute
Michigan Audubon
Michigan Farmers Union
Milwaukee Riverkeeper
Minnesota Conservation Federation
Minnesota Division, Izaak Walton League of America
Minnesota Environmental Partnership

Minnesota Farmers Union
Mississippi River Network
Mississippi River Trust
Mississippi Wildlife Federation
Missouri Farmers Union
Missouri Prairie Foundation
Missouri River Bird Observatory
Missouri Stream Team Watershed Coalition
Montana Farmers Union
Montana Organic Association
Montana Wildlife Federation
Native Prairies Association of Texas
Nebraska Farmers Union
Nebraska Wildlife Federation
Neighboring Food Co-op Association
Nevada Wildlife Federation
New England Farmers Union
New Mexico Food & Agriculture Policy Council
New York State Ornithological Association
North Dakota Farmers Union
North Dakota Wildlife Federation
Northeast Organic Farming Association-Interstate
Council
Northern Virginia Conservation Trust
Northwest Farmers Union
Ohio Conservation Federation
Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association
Ohio Environmental Council
Ohio Farmers Union
Onondaga Audubon (New York)
Oregon Climate and Agriculture Network
Our Santa Fe River
Pasa Sustainable Agriculture
PennFuture

Pennsylvania Council of Churches
Pennsylvania Division, Izaak Walton League of America
Penns Valley Conservation Association
Pinelands Preservation Alliance (New Jersey)
Porter County, Indiana Chapter- Izaak Walton League
Potomac Conservancy
Prairie Rivers Network
Quivira Coalition
Rivertown Coalition for Clean Air and Water (PA)
Rockbridge Area Conservation Council
Rocky Mountain Farmers Union
Salem Audubon Society
Savanna Institute
Saving Birds Thru Habitat
Sociedad Ornitologica Puertorriquena
Soque River Watershed Association (Georgia)
South Carolina Wildlife Federation
South Dakota Wildlife Federation
Southeast Rural Community Assistance Project
Southeastern Massachusetts Agricultural Partnership
Sustainable Food Center (Texas)
Texas Conservation Alliance
The Sustainable Business Network of Massachusetts
Unitarian Universalist Church of Roanoke
Utah Wildlife Federation
Vermont Center for Ecostudies
Virginia Association for Biological Farming
Virginia Conservation Network
Virginia Division, Izaak Walton League of America
Waterkeepers Chesapeake
Wildlife Mississippi
Wisconsin Farmers Union
Wyoming Wildlife Federation

cc: The Honorable Debbie Stabenow, Chairwoman, Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry and the Honorable David Scott, Chairman, House Committee on Agriculture