

Speaker John Boehner  
US House of Representatives  
Washington DC

Majority Leader Eric Cantor  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington DC

Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi  
US House of Representatives  
Washington DC

Minority Whip Steny Hoyer  
US House of Representatives  
Washington DC

November 26, 2012

The undersigned organizations, representing millions of hunters, anglers, scientists, and conservationists, encourage the United States House of Representatives to prioritize passage of a full five-year Farm Bill during the weeks that remain in the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress. We understand the many pressing issues that await the attention of Congress, but with the Senate having passed its version of the Farm Bill, and a bipartisan committee-passed version ready for the House floor, there is perhaps no other legislation more ready for completion than the 2012 Farm Bill.

The Farm Bill represents the largest investment in private lands conservation, funding programs that – by improving air and water quality, helping to reduce flooding, recharging groundwater aquifers, and creating essential fish and wildlife habitat – provide meaningful benefits to all Americans and taxpayers.

The bill currently waiting for floor consideration in the House cuts \$6 billion from conservation funding over ten years, reductions in funding that will certainly impact the delivery of on-the-ground conservation. Although we understand the need to be fiscally responsible and reduce our national deficit, farm bill conservation provisions are the very tools producers are using to recover from the severe drought, wild fires, and other natural disasters. Conservation programs help build resiliency into farming and ranching operations while protecting our drinking water, cleaning the air we breathe, and reducing soil erosion so events like the Dust Bowl are less likely to occur again. What has become clear since the 2008 Farm Bill expired on September 30, is that the costs of having no Farm Bill at all far outweigh the funding reductions passed by the House Agriculture Committee. We encourage House leadership to bring that bill to the floor, and to oppose any further reductions in conservation funding.

When looking for ways to improve the 2012 Farm Bill for the American taxpayer, Congress should pass a Farm Bill that also re-links crop insurance with conservation compliance and that includes a nationwide Sodsaver program. Recoupling conservation compliance to crop insurance and including a national Sodsaver provision are fiscally responsible and necessary to avoid creating environmental problems which would increase the tax burden for local, state, and federal taxpayers.

Not a regulation, but rather a reasonable condition for farmers seeking significant taxpayer support, conservation compliance reduces taxpayers' financing of risky agricultural actions on unproven land. It helps focus federal crop insurance dollars on more productive acres, and reduces the need for additional taxpayer funded mitigation of environmental degradation in the future. A nationwide Sodsaver program

would reduce the federal incentives that encourage conversion of sensitive and marginal lands, and only a nationwide form of the Sodsaver program would be fair to all producers and taxpayers. Both programs would realize savings, and both were included in the Senate-passed Farm Bill.

Americans need a Farm Bill, and there is no better time for Congress to complete this important task than over the final weeks of the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress. If passage of a full five-year Farm Bill is pushed into 2013 or beyond, budget and landscape pressures will make completion of a Farm Bill ever tougher. We encourage the House to bring forward as soon as possible a Farm Bill that maintains bipartisan Committee-passed funding levels, re-links crop insurance and conservation compliance, and includes a nationwide Sodsaver program.

Finally, our country is recovering from the largest drought since the 1930s, with most of the counties across the nation being declared agricultural disaster areas by the U.S. Department of Agriculture at some point during 2012, and 55 percent of the nation's pasture and rangeland rated in poor to very poor condition. Any temporary extension of the 2008 Farm Bill would be a short-sighted, inadequate solution. Both the Senate and the House Committee on Agriculture passed versions of a five-year farm bill with strong bipartisan support. We urge you to lead your colleagues in passing a new 2012 Farm Bill this year. We thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

American Fisheries Society  
American Fly Fishing Trade Association  
American Sportfishing Association  
Archery Trade Association  
Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies  
B.A.S.S. LLC  
Boone & Crockett Club  
Bowhunter Preservation Alliance  
Campfire Club of America  
Catch-A-Dream Foundation  
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation  
Delta Waterfowl Foundation  
Ducks Unlimited  
International Hunter Education Association  
-United States of America  
Izaak Walton League of America  
Masters of Foxhounds Association  
Mule Deer Foundation  
National Association of Forest Service Retirees  
North American Grouse Partnership  
National Shooting Sports Foundation

National Trapper's Association  
Orion-The Hunters' Institute  
Pheasants Forever  
Pope and Young Club  
Public Lands Foundation  
Quail Forever  
Quail Unlimited  
Quality Deer Management Association  
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation  
Ruffed Grouse Society  
Texas Wildlife Association  
The Conservation Fund  
The Nature Conservancy  
The Wildlife Society  
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership  
Trout Unlimited  
U.S. Sportsmen's Alliance  
Wild Sheep Foundation  
Wildlife Forever  
Wildlife Management Institute  
Wildlife Mississippi