

Conservation is a state of harmony between men and land
Aldo Leopold

May 1, 2007

The Honorable Tom Harkin, Chairman
Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry
Room SR-328A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC. 20510-6000

Re: Regional Water Enhancement Program

Dear Senator Harkin:

The lasting stewardship of our nation's agricultural lands and water resources depends on agricultural producers, farmers, ranchers and water agencies working together with other partners to address water resource issues in the basins and watersheds in which they reside. To achieve this goal, a new "regional" approach to water conservation is needed to encourage and support collaboration between agriculture and other segments of the community to protect and enhance our precious water resources.

We are writing to support the **Regional Water Enhancement Program (RWEP)**. **RWEP** is an important new component of the Conservation Title in the 2007 Farm Bill, focused on improving the quality and quantity of our water resources across the country. **RWEP** is targeted to both significantly and effectively improve water quality, and provide for measurable and meaningful improvements in water quantity, in ways that take advantage of regional partnerships and priorities.

Under **RWEP**, agriculture producers, farmers, ranchers, water agencies and a wide variety of other partners would be encouraged to identify water quality or water conservation priorities for their watershed, and to develop specific strategies for addressing those priorities and achieving measurable outcomes. Partnerships would be allowed flexibility in funding and the use of the tools most appropriate to reach their desired outcomes. **RWEP** grants would be awarded to partnerships that demonstrate broad collaboration, are seeking significant water quality or quantity benefits, and have measurable outcomes. Further grants would be based on measurable progress in achieving these identified outcomes. Higher levels of participation by producers and others that lead to improved stream flows and groundwater levels or water quality, consistent with state water laws, would be rewarded.

The heart of **RWEP** is the cooperation that it would engender. Agriculture producers, farmers, ranchers and water agencies would work with their neighbors and local communities, non-profits, tribes, and government agencies to achieve shared water quality and conservation goals

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at the watershed scale that they know best. Such cooperation is our best hope for the conservation of our nation's precious water resources.

We therefore strongly urge that you incorporate the **Regional Water Enhancement Program** into the 2007 Farm Bill.

ACWA (Association of California Water Agencies)
American Water Works Association
California Cattlemen's Association
Chesapeake Bay Foundation
Coalition for Sustainable Agriculture (Sonoma County, CA)
Family Farm Alliance
Idaho Water Users Association
Iowa Soybean Association
Lower Mississippi River Conservation Committee
Mississippi River Trust
National Association of Clean Water Agencies
National Water Resources Association
Sand County Foundation
The Nature Conservancy
Trout Unlimited
WaterReuse Association
Wetland Habitat Alliance of Texas
Wildlife Forever
Wildlife Mississippi

cc: Senator Debbie Stabenow, Chairperson
Subcommittee on Rural Revitalization, Conservation,
Forestry and Credit Jurisdiction