



June 13, 2007

The Honorable Collin Peterson  
 Chairman  
 Committee on Agriculture  
 U.S. House of Representatives  
 Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Bob Goodlatte  
 Ranking Member  
 Committee on Agriculture  
 U.S. House of Representatives  
 Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tim Holden  
 Chairman  
 Subcommittee on Conservation, Credit,  
 Energy and Research  
 Committee on Agriculture  
 U.S. House of Representatives  
 Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Frank Lucas  
 Ranking Member  
 Subcommittee on Conservation, Credit,  
 Energy and Research  
 Committee on Agriculture  
 U.S. House of Representatives  
 Washington, DC 20515

**Subject: Cooperative Approaches to Water Quality Protection in the 2007 Farm Bill**

Dear Representatives:

As representatives of tens of thousands of public and privately owned drinking water and wastewater systems serving millions of Americans, we thank you for including cooperative opportunities to improve water quality and quantity in the Conservation Title of the 2007 Farm Bill. Your leadership in developing multi-stakeholder programs to implement regional, watershed-based conservation projects is greatly appreciated and we are writing to commend you for your hard work in this area.

We believe the productivity of our nation's agricultural lands and health of our water resources will greatly benefit from Conservation Title's proposed Regional Surface and Groundwater Enhancement Program and Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative. Both of these programs will promote community conservation goals by enabling farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners to work with partners such as water districts to achieve shared environmental goals in their watersheds.

In moving toward full committee markup of the Farm Bill we hope you continue to promote the visions of these programs. We also ask that you keep in mind some guiding principals to ensure these programs meet the goals you have established for them:

- A competitive funding process should be used to select projects that involve multiple stakeholders, have identifiable performance targets, and watershed benefits consistent with local and state priorities.
- Conservation project proposals should originate with the partners, who submit them to the Secretary of Agriculture for approval and funding.
- Because successful cooperative partnerships will require a substantial federal investment to augment efforts at the local level, USDA should be required to devote a significant percentage of conservation funds toward these grant programs.

Also please remember that water utilities have a critical interest in protecting our nation's water resources and possess needed technical expertise. Promoting environmental health and protecting water quality are among the top priorities of America's drinking water and wastewater community. As such, the legislation should make clear that both public and privately owned drinking water and wastewater utilities are eligible to enter into these partnerships.

Thank you again for including the Regional Surface and Groundwater Enhancement Program and Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative in the Conservation Title. We believe multi-stakeholder projects will play an important role in improving water quality and enhancing water conservation, and we look forward to continuing to work with you as the Farm Bill progresses through Congress. Your leadership is sincerely appreciated.

Sincerely,

American Public Works Association  
American Water Works Association  
Association of California Water Agencies  
Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies  
Coachella Valley Water District  
Inland Empire Utilities District  
National Association of Clean Water Agencies  
National Association of Water Companies  
National Water Resources Association  
U.S. Conference of Mayors  
WaterReuse Association  
Water Environment Federation