



2007 Farm Bill Reauthorization and Potential Clean Water Benefits

The reauthorization of the 2002 Farm Bill in the 110th Congress presents policymakers with an excellent opportunity to strengthen the conservation titles in farm bill legislation in order to maximize the water quality benefits of these popular programs. The National Association of Clean Water Agencies (NACWA)* supports increased annual funding for conservation programs that provide assistance to producers who want to undertake projects that help to achieve cleaner water.

According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, nonpoint source pollution, including agricultural runoff, is the leading cause of impairment to U.S. waterways. Today, 40 percent of the nation's rivers and streams, 45 percent of lakes, and 50 percent of estuaries that have been assessed do not meet water quality standards — a challenge that will take a holistic watershed approach to remedy.

Clearly, agricultural interests have a unique challenge and, through the reauthorization of federal conservation programs, a unique opportunity to share the costs and rewards of restoring the quality of our waterways to make them safe for swimming and fishing. Increased funding to programs such as the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP), and the Conservation Security Program (CSP) will enable many more producers to participate in these conservation efforts.

NACWA supports the following goals in new legislation to address federal farm and food policies:

- 1) maximize funding for conservation programs that target water quality improvements through coordinated efforts with like-minded interest groups;
- 2) identify specific mechanisms for tracking the success of conservation measures;
- 3) promote watershed-wide coordination and water quality credit trading between clean water agencies and other users to maximize the funds available and investments made to meet the goals of the Clean Water Act; and
- 4) incorporate provisions to enhance farmland nutrient management and affirm the right of producers to choose the fertilizer they consider most cost-effective and beneficial.

NACWA's public clean water agencies strongly support Farm Bill conservation programs and are uniquely situated to work with farmers, ranchers, foresters, and producers to maximize spending on conservation projects to achieve maximal environmental benefits.

For more information on how municipal clean water agencies can help to strengthen the conservation programs in the new farm bill, please contact NACWA's Lee Garrigan, at (202) 833-4655 or at lgarrigan@nacwa.org.

* Founded in 1970, NACWA represents the interests of nearly 300 of the nation's public clean water agencies. NACWA members serve the majority of the sewered population in the United States and collectively treat and reclaim over 18 billion gallons of wastewater every day.