



*Local governments working together for a better metropolitan region*

February 20, 2007

The Honorable Collin C. Peterson, Chairman  
House Committee on Agriculture  
Longworth House Office Building 1301  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Tom Harkin, Chairman  
Senate Committee on Agriculture,  
Nutrition and Forestry  
Russell Senate Office Building 328A  
Washington, D.C. 20510

District of Columbia  
Bladensburg\*  
Bowie  
College Park  
Frederick  
Frederick County  
Gaithersburg  
Greenbelt  
Montgomery County  
Prince George's County  
Rockville  
Takoma Park  
Alexandria  
Arlington County  
Fairfax  
Fairfax County  
Falls Church  
Loudoun County  
Manassas  
Manassas Park  
Prince William County  
\*Adjunct member

Re: Conservation Title in 2007 Farm Bill

Dear Chairman (Peterson/Harkin):

I am writing as Chair of the Chesapeake Bay and Water Resources Policy Committee of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) to add our voice to those calling for the devotion of more federal resources to conservation efforts in the new farm bill. Specifically, committee members would like to see an expansion in the Conservation Security Program from its current limited availability in a few targeted watersheds to a program in which all farmers in the Chesapeake Bay watershed could participate.

COG, which serves the interests of its 21 member governments in the national capital area, represents a primarily urban region. However, even in our region, agriculture is an integral part of ongoing efforts to restore water quality in local streams and the Chesapeake Bay. Over the past year, we have toured several farms in our region, met directly with farmers, the Farm Bureau, environmental groups, elected officials and others. All of these interactions have left us with a clear message about accelerating efforts to reduce nutrient runoff from farms in the Mid-Atlantic region – that the issue is a lack of resources, not a lack of will.

While federal programs under the farm bill's Conservation Title have been helpful in providing needed cost-share assistance, limited eligibility, restricted geographic scope and the inflexibility of some program guidelines have reduced their effectiveness. In our review of the issue, expanding the eligibility and scope of the Conservation Security Program emerged as the single biggest priority for achieving progress toward Chesapeake Bay restoration goals. Therefore, we respectfully request an expansion in the Conservation Security Program from its current limited availability in a few targeted watersheds to a program in which all farmers in the Chesapeake Bay watershed could participate.

Thank you for considering this important request.

Sincerely,

Martin Nohe, Chair, Chesapeake Bay and Water Resources Policy Committee of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments  
Member, Prince William County Board of Supervisors

Copies of this correspondence provided to:

Chesapeake Bay Executive Council members:

Governor Tim Kaine  
Governor Martin O'Malley  
Mayor Adrian Fenty  
Governor Ed Rendell  
Chesapeake Bay Commission Chair Emmett Hanger Jr.  
EPA Administrator Stephen Johnson

COG region congressional delegation members:

Senator Barbara Mikulski  
Senator Ben Cardin  
Senator Jim Webb  
Senator John Warner  
Representative Albert Wynn  
Representative Roscoe Bartlett  
Representative Christopher Van Hollen  
Representative Steny Hoyer  
Representative Frank Wolf  
Representative James Moran  
Representative Tom Davis

Members, Board of Directors, Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments