May 15, 2018

Dear Representative,

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we urge you to protect conservation funding and not allow any rescission package to include Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) conservation funding.

The proposed rescission package would affect a number of important programs administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and hinder or terminate ongoing efforts that conserve our air, water, land, wildlife and public health. Our nation must continue to support farmers, ranchers and landowners and our environment by supporting valuable NRCS programs, not robbing them of essential funding.

The Administration’s proposal erroneously states that these funds cannot be used, are allocated to eliminated programs, or are unobligated funds that are in excess of what is needed to carry out each program. In fact, much of those funds are identified for future use and those balances continue to support critical projects nationwide. Cutting this funding will impede landowner access to essential resources and limit NRCS’ ability to provide a quality customer experience. Rescinding these funds is contrary to the intent of past Farm Bills and reverses current policy that allows NRCS flexibility in obligating Farm Bill dollars.

We are especially concerned about the following proposed rescissions:

* $144 million from the NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program from fiscal years 2014-2017, plus an additional $13 million in EQIP funding from prior to the 2014 Farm Bill.
* $356 million in unobligated balances on programs that were not extended in the 2014 Farm Bill, but their programmatic uses continue on, including:
* $147 million from the Farm and Ranchland Protection Program.
* $33 million from the Grassland Reserve Program.
* $7.5 million from the Agriculture Water Enhancement Program.
* $155 million from the Commodity Credit Corporation to administer the Wetlands Reserve Program.
* $157 million from the NRCS Watershed Program, including:
  + $50 million from the Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations program.
  + $107 from the Emergency Watershed Protection program.

NRCS programs are vital to communities committed to producing our food and fiber and conserving our natural resources. This funding continues to support those programs’ important projects.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

American Farmland Trust

American Rivers

Defenders of Wildlife

Land Improvement Contractors of America

National Association of Conservation Districts

National Farmers Union

National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition

National Wildlife Federation

The Conservation Fund

Western Landowners Alliance