

News Release



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Healthy Waters Coalition Applauds Focus on Nutrients in Conservation Partnership Program

The Healthy Waters Coalition, a diverse cross-section of municipal and state water and wastewater organizations, conservation and sustainable agricultural organizations applaud Senate Agriculture Chairwoman Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) and Ranking Member Pat Roberts (R-KS) for including resources for agricultural producers who take steps to manage nutrients on their lands and take other steps to avoid adverse water quality impacts in the Senate Farm Bill reauthorization package.

The Coalition recognizes and applauds provisions inserted in the newly established Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) that will provide greater opportunity for farmers concerned about nutrient run-off from their operations to address these concerns proactively with stable funding over a five year period of time and with local partnering organizations.

According to State water quality reports, 80,000 miles of rivers and streams, 2.5 million acres of lakes, reservoirs and ponds, 78% of the assessed continental U.S. coastal areas and more than 30% of estuaries are impaired due to excessive levels of nitrogen and phosphorus (nutrients). In all, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency attributes excess nutrients as the direct or indirect cause of impairments in over 50% of impaired river and stream miles; over 50% of impaired lake acres; and nearly 60% of impaired bay and estuarine square miles. For the majority of these waters, nutrient run-off from agricultural lands is the dominant source of the nutrient impairments according to studies by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS). Over this next decade, the critical challenge facing efforts to restore and maintain clean and safe water is whether excessive amounts of nitrogen and phosphorus (nutrients) in our waters can be reduced.

Critical waterbodies throughout America, such as the Chesapeake Bay, the Gulf of Mexico and the Great Lakes, suffer due to excessive amounts of nutrients that cause hypoxic conditions, also known as deadzones, which lead to fish kills, toxic algal blooms, contaminated drinking water supplies and losses to local economies. The RCPP leverages additional resources from state and local partners to offer increased assistance to farmers in these and other important watersheds to help them address the nutrient challenges faced by these watersheds. This is an important step forward for agricultural policy.

We applaud the bi-partisan support that water quality issues have received during the Senate Farm Bill debate. In addition to the work of Chairwoman Stabenow and Ranking Member Roberts, we also

recognize Senator Ben Cardin (D-MD) and other senators from the states in the Chesapeake Bay watershed for their successful efforts to ensure that the Senate farm bill's conservation title includes strong provisions to help producers achieve water quality goals.

American Fly Fishing Trade Association
American Rivers
American Public Works Association
Association of Drinking Water Administrators
Association of California Water Agencies
Association of Clean Water Administrators
Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies
California Association of Sanitation Agencies
Chesapeake Bay Foundation
Environmental Defense Fund
Environmental Working Group
Healing Our Waters – Great Lakes Coalition
National Association Clean Water Agencies
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition
National Association of Water Companies
National Parks Conservation Association
Water Environment Federation