

January 28, 2014



Dear Member of Congress:

As you consider final passage of the Agricultural Act of 2014, the undersigned organizations representing municipal and state water and wastewater organizations, and conservation and sustainable agriculture organizations urge you to vote in favor of the bill as it significantly strengthens the links between our working agricultural lands and the quality of our Nation's waters.

H.R. 2642 makes significant strides toward helping farmers manage nutrients on their lands to ensure better stewardship of our water quality. Specifically, provisions contained within the newly established Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCP) include encouraging partnerships between agricultural producers and municipal entities such as water and wastewater utilities and non-governmental organizations to help farmers manage nutrients more effectively, provide stable five-year funding for nutrient management practices, prioritize nutrient management activities in critical watersheds, and prioritize conservation investments that result in overall water quality gains. Collectively, these provisions provide important steps forward in conservation and water quality policy.

Nutrient runoff is the greatest water quality challenge facing the United States today. 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 reducing excessive amounts of nutrients in our waterways.

H.R. 2642 establishes policies to more effectively reduce agricultural nutrient run-off and improve water quality throughout the United States. Critical watersheds such as the Mississippi River Basin-Gulf of Mexico, the Chesapeake Bay and the Great Lakes, would all benefit from targeted investments that these provisions would allow.

We urge you to vote in favor of the Agricultural Act of 2014 to support our nation's water quality goals.

Sincerely,

American Public Works Association
American Water Works Association
Association of Clean Water Administrators
Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies
Association of State Drinking Water Administrators

California Association Sanitation Agencies
Chesapeake Bay Foundation
Chesapeake Conservancy
Connecticut River Watershed Council
Endangered Habitats League
Green Bay Metropolitan Sewerage District
Iowa Soybean Association
Lower Susquehanna Riverkeeper
Muskegon River Watershed Assembly
National Association of Clean Water Agencies
National Association Water Companies
Pacific Northwest Clean Water Association
Water Environment Federation