

Steven J. McCormick
President and Chief Executive Officer

August 7, 2007

The Honorable Collin C. Peterson, Chairman
House Committee on Agriculture
1301 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Bob Goodlatte, Ranking Member
House Committee on Agriculture
1305 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Peterson and Ranking Member Goodlatte:

The Nature Conservancy applauds the work of the House Agriculture Committee to include several important provisions in the conservation title of HR 2419, the Farm, Nutrition, and Bioenergy Act of 2007. Thank you for your work to ensure that these provisions were included in the bill that passed the House last week.

Most importantly, we appreciate the authorization to allow additional acreage in both the Grasslands Reserve Program and the Wetlands Reserve Program. Both of these programs provide significant long-term benefits to the public through maintenance and enhancement of critical habitat areas that occur in agricultural landscapes. The demand for voluntary landowner participation in both programs will far exceed the caps currently contained in the bill and we look forward to working with the House and the Senate to secure additional budgetary resources for these programs prior to final enactment of the bill.

We are gratified at the recognition given to the difficulties facing family forest landowners. Their forests provide wood products and environmental benefits – valuable contributions to rural communities – and can be immensely assisted by the Farm Bill. We appreciate the steps taken in the House to allow forest landowners to participate in EQIP, to create an emergency forestry restoration program, to establish a process for assessment and planning, and to fund the Healthy Forest Reserve Program.

Specifically, we appreciate the inclusion of a floodplain pilot program within the Wetlands Reserve Program; language to ensure water savings generated by Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) investments accrue in part to the environment, and the creation of a new Regional Water Enhancement Program that will help coalitions of landowners and other partners effectively work together to solve problems and address issues of mutual concern.

We congratulate the Committee on these provisions. Please express our appreciation to your staff for their tireless work with us on these important issues.

Sincerely,



cc: The House Agriculture Committee