

## **Myths About the Boehlert-Kind-Gilchrest-Dingell Amendment: The Misinformation Campaign Continues**

This morning the House Agriculture Committee staff sent out talking points against the Boehlert-Kind-Gilchrest-Dingell amendment that again portrays the Conservation amendment unfairly. We would like, again, to set the record straight by presenting the facts:

**ALLEGATION:** The amendment invites application of the Clean Water Act to farmers by requiring monitoring.

**FACT:** While one of the pilot programs in the bill contains a voluntary monitoring provisions in the bill - in order to assess the effectiveness of conservation programs, something the House Agriculture Committee itself voiced support for during its hearings this spring - it does not alter the Clean Water Act in any way whatsoever or alter the authority of the EPA.

**ALLEGATION:** The amendment eviscerates the safety net for producers.

**FACT:** Under the amendment, producers - even the top 10 percent of producers - still get higher payments than the average of the past 10 years, and many times more than they were to receive under the last farm bill.

**FACT:** According to the Bush Administration's official statement of policy issued yesterday, "there is no question that some of our nation's producers are in serious financial straits, especially smaller farmers and ranchers. Rather than address these unmet needs, *H.R. 2646 would continue to direct the greatest share of resources to those least in need of government assistance...*"(Official SAP, October 3, 2001, emphasis added).

**ALLEGATION:** The amendment seeks to "encumber" millions of acres of land with permanent easements.

**FACT:** Like the Agriculture Committee's bill itself, the amendment contains some provisions for permanent easements to retire marginal cropland and "buffers" to protect streams from runoff. But the overwhelming amount of funding in the amendment goes to working lands, to help farmers afford to stay on the land and keep their lands in production.

**ALLEGATION:** The amendment requires the money in the Environmental Quality Incentives Program to be spent on small farmers and those that are socially disadvantaged farmers.

**FACT:** The amendment simply seeks to ensure that small farmers and those traditionally disadvantaged get to compete. This is important because, as the Bush Administration said in its official position statement yesterday, the Agriculture Committee's bill helps those who are least in need of assistance.

ALLEGATION: The amendment spends \$1 billion on only 5 watersheds.

FACT: This is absurd. The Agriculture Committee staff apparently is deliberately misreading a provision establishing a pilot program under the EQIP program focused on 5 watersheds a year.

ALLEGATION: The amendment requires money to be spent on endangered species habitat.

FACT: There is absolutely NO mention of endangered species in the amendment whatsoever. Just as in the House Agriculture Committee's bill, the wildlife conservation programs in the bill benefit game and non-game species. That's why the amendment is supported by Ducks Unlimited, Trout Unlimited, the Izaak Walton League, and many, many others.

ALLEGATION: Prohibits family cattlemen, dairymen and pork producers from receiving any assistance to build critical waste management facilities.

FACT: The amendment raises the limit for funding available to livestock producers under the EQIP program from \$50,000 to \$150,000. While this is somewhat less than the \$200,000 limit in the bill reported by the House Agriculture Committee, we believe the difference hardly qualifies it as unrealistic or harmful to farmers, particularly considering that it triples the current limit.

FACT: Under the amendment all livestock farms would be eligible for significant assistance for land management practices and technical assistance through the EQIP program. In the amendment as in current law, we maintain the focus of EQIP's manure management assistance on small and medium-sized livestock farms for manure management assistance. This would allow the participation of more than 97 percent of dairy farms nationwide.