



## Defenders of Wildlife

# Agricultural Stewardship in America

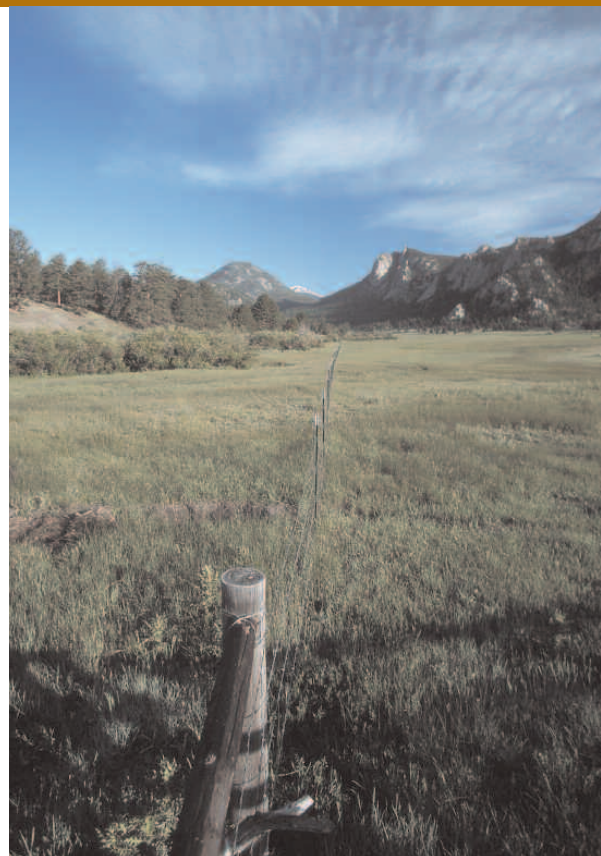
## Advancing Conservation in The 2007 Farm Bill

The Farm Bill has a far-reaching impact on wildlife habitat conservation choices made by farmers and ranchers. Many plant and animal species listed as threatened or endangered are found on private lands, and agricultural activity can often disrupt or kill plant and animal life. The conservation programs provided through the Farm Bill help improve water quality, reduce soil erosion, restore native habitat and protect wildlife.

The money provided through the Farm Bill is our single largest source of federal money for natural resource conservation, providing an average of \$3 billion per year between 2002 and 2006. This amount far exceeds the money provided through the Endangered Species Act. In 2007, Congress will have the opportunity to increase resources and money for the Farm Bill, thereby providing private landowners with the means to conserve and restore wildlife habitat and protect water and soil resources.

Defenders of Wildlife supports the full suite of conservation programs authorized in the 2002 Farm Bill and strongly encourages the reauthorization and expansion of these programs in 2007. Please see the reverse of this sheet for specific suggestions to improve the efficacy of the Farm Bill conservation programs.

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### Farm Bill Conservation Funding

Within the Farm Bill, funding falls into the categories of nutrition assistance, commodity subsidies and conservation. In fiscal year 2006, the conservation title of the Farm Bill received considerably less funding than either the nutrition or commodity categories. With the ever-increasing need for conservation and good stewardship practices, and with a waiting list of qualified landowners who would like to enroll in conservation programs, Congress should increase Farm Bill funding for conservation. More landowners could then take advantage of these voluntary programs that provide public benefits such as clean water, healthy soils and habitat for wildlife.

# Defenders' Recommendations for Improving Wildlife Conservation In the 2007 Farm Bill

## Promote Strategic Conservation

Wildlife Action Plans, recently developed by each state, identify at-risk habitats and species that need special conservation attention. Congress should set aside federal funds in the Farm Bill to be allocated to funding wildlife action plans that include mapped priorities for conservation. In particular, Congress should continue the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) with a 100 percent cost-share for projects that are 15 years or longer and target habitats identified in the state Wildlife Action Plans.

## Fully Fund CSP

The Conservation Security Program (CSP) has not been fully funded since its inception in 2002. Congress should fully fund and promote this program, which rewards farmers for ongoing whole-farm stewardship. Wildlife and habitat conservation should receive equal priority with water and soil concerns. New components in CSP should also be developed to control invasive species and conserve native pollinators.

## Promote Proactive Conservation

New policies should be created to encourage private and public partnerships, such as proactive and market oriented incentive strategies, eco-tourism and eco-labeling. Expand and increase the funding for the Partnerships and Cooperation Program. The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) should emphasize funding of projects that safely reduce conflicts between wildlife and agriculture.

## Implement Wildlife-friendly energy policy

The next Farm Bill should help farmers reduce their energy use, and promote farm-based renewable energy without compromising wildlife habitat quality or quantity.

## End Practices Harmful To Species and Habitats

In addition to rewarding practices that help wildlife, the next Farm Bill should also take a "first, do no harm" approach to the use of taxpayer dollars. To that end, we support a "Sodsaver" provision that prohibits subsidies on any natural habitats converted to agricultural production. We also oppose the use of EQIP to subsidize the creation or expansion of confined animal feeding operations.

## Offer One-Stop Shopping

Congress should create an administrative mechanism for one-stop shopping, allowing landowners access to multiple federal and state programs without the inconvenience of multiple applications. One-stop shopping would improve coordination encourage more landowners to apply for conservation funding.

## Increase Irrigated Land Rental Rates

The Conservation Reserve Program and the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program do not provide sufficient payment levels to encourage all landowners to participate in habitat protection. Congress should increase irrigated land rental rates to ensure a greater level of enrollment in these programs.

## Allocate a Portion of Federal Funds to Joint Federal-State Accounts

A variety of state programs also offer conservation incentives for private landowners. A portion of the funding from the Farm Bill should be allocated to joint federal-state accounts to fund additional high-priority habitat conservation projects.

## Provide Technical Assistance

Greater funding should be allocated for technical assistance. Additional funding should be given to the U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), which provides technical assistance to landowners in the development of their conservation projects. Additionally, funds should be allocated to create a Resource Conservation Corps, whereby recent graduates with natural resource or agricultural degrees could participate in a two-year volunteer program in exchange for federal service and as a way to repay school loans.

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