

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 23, 2013

The Honorable Harry Reid  
Senate Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Senate Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Boehner  
Speaker of the House  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Minority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Senate Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry  
Chairwoman Debbie Stabenow  
328A Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Senate Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry  
Ranking Member Thad Cochran  
328A Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

House Committee on Agriculture  
Chairman Frank Lucas  
1301 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

House Committee on Agriculture  
Ranking Member Collin Peterson  
1305 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Majority Leader Reid, Minority Leader McConnell, Speaker Boehner, Minority Leader Pelosi, Chairwoman Stabenow, Ranking Member Cochran, Chairman Lucas, and Ranking Member Peterson:

We are writing to express our strong support for the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) in S. 954, the Agriculture Reform, Food and Jobs Act of 2013 (the 2013 Farm Bill) as reported from the Senate. As the conference committee on the 2013 Farm Bill gets underway, we respectfully urge you to incorporate the version of the RCPP included in S. 954 as was reported by the Senate into the Farm Bill conference report.

The Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries are tremendously important natural resources to our region and our nation. Farmers in our states who operate in the Chesapeake Bay watershed face tremendous pressure to control nutrient and sediment loss from their farms. The Farm Bill's conservation programs have proven incredibly valuable to farmers in our region in mitigating the impact of nutrient runoff and helping our farmers achieve these needed pollution reductions. Our work with Chairwoman Stabenow and Ranking Member Cochran to improve the Senate's version of the Regional Conservation Partnership Program will help maintain the federal government's commitment to assisting farmers do their part to protect the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries.

Maintaining USDA's role in protecting the Chesapeake Bay is a priority for the regional delegation in both the House and Senate and among both Republicans and Democrats. Prior to House Agriculture Committee's consideration of the Farm Bill in 2012, a bi-partisan group of 17 House Members (6 Republicans and 11 Democrats) introduced legislation in support of the Farm Bill's current Chesapeake Bay conservation programs. This kind of across the aisle support for funding shows how important this federal focus to conservation is to the Bay's 64,000 square-mile watershed.

We recognize Congressional leadership's desire to reform and consolidate the Farm Bill's conservation programs. The Senate's version of the Regional Conservation Partnership Program fully respects the construction of the new program. The differences between the Senate RCPP and the House RCPP primarily focus on ensuring that resources go to regions with the most need and proven benefit.

This is an issue of the utmost importance to all of us and we respectfully ask that you adopt the Senate's version of the Regional Conservation Partnership Program as work continues to finalize the 2013 Farm Bill reauthorization.

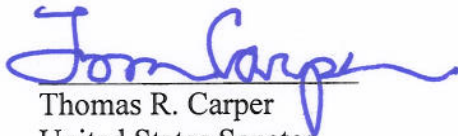
Sincerely,



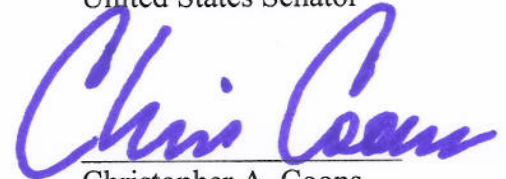
Benjamin L. Cardin  
United States Senator



Barbara A. Mikulski  
United States Senator



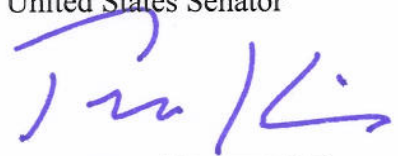
Thomas R. Carper  
United States Senator



Christopher A. Coons  
United States Senator



Mark R. Warner  
United States Senator



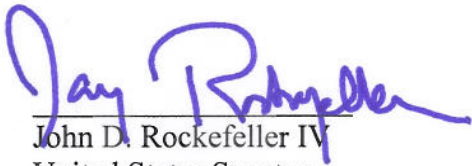
Tim Kaine  
United States Senator



Charles E. Schumer  
United States Senator



Kirsten E. Gillibrand  
United States Senator

Handwritten signature of Jay Rockefeller in blue ink.

John D. Rockefeller IV  
United States Senator

Handwritten signature of Bob Casey, Jr. in blue ink.

Robert P. Casey, Jr.  
United States Senator