

October 13, 2017

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow  
Ranking Member, U.S. Senate Committee on  
Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry  
731 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510-2204

The Honorable Joni Ernst  
Member, U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture,  
Nutrition and Forestry  
111 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Senators Stabenow and Ernst,

We write to you today on behalf of the Midwest Row Crop Collaborative (MRCC) to offer our support for the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) in the upcoming Farm Bill discussions. The Collaborative is a diverse coalition working to expand agricultural solutions that protect air and water quality, and enhance soil health, while remaining committed to producing the food, fuel, and fiber the world needs. Our members — Cargill, Environmental Defense Fund, General Mills, Kellogg Company, Land O'Lakes, Inc., McDonald's, Monsanto, PepsiCo, The Nature Conservancy, Unilever, Walmart, and World Wildlife Fund — are working together to support farmer-led efforts to improve soil health, reduce nutrient losses into the rivers and streams of the Mississippi River Basin, and maximize water conservation.

Farmer-led conservation is essential to making measurable progress against the water-quality challenges facing our nation today. Farmers have shown time and again they are best positioned to improve and conserve our nation's natural resources when the public, private, and NGO sectors support voluntary environmental stewardship.

The Regional Conservation Partnership Program and underlying federal conservation programs are a critical part of supporting farmers' field-level efforts to improve water quality, strengthen soil health, and reduce nutrient loss into the Mississippi River and other waterways. The MRCC supports legislative efforts to continue to improve and enhance RCPP and appreciates your bipartisan leadership with the Regional Conservation Partnership Program Improvement Act.

Congress will consider a series of landmark legislation over the coming months. We urge you to invest in the RCPP. The program's proven results, investments in public-private partnerships, and cost-effective approach to supporting farmer-led conservation have only underscored why the RCPP should be continued and improved.

The Collaborative's members have all seen firsthand the essential role the RCPP can play in achieving significant conservation outcomes. In addition to the many RCPP projects our individual members are funding, the MRCC has directly invested in the following RCPP projects:

- The Midwest Agriculture Water Quality Partnership has matched \$9.5 million in federal funding with over \$38 million in private investment from more than 40 partners. The Partnership promotes science-based, non-regulatory approaches to reducing nutrient loss and improving water quality, soil health, and habitat for at-risk species. It aims to scale up conservation planning and delivery by leveraging partner-farmer relationships and precision agriculture technology to improve environmental outcomes and

farmland productivity at the same time. The Partnership focuses on natural resource challenges in Nebraska, Iowa, and Illinois.

- The Precision Conservation Management program (PCM) combines farm business financial planning with precision conservation technology to inform decision making on conservation practices. PCM's 30 partners aim to quantify the farmer's bottom line benefit from adopting conservation practices, from efficiency gains to risk mitigation, in a data-driven approach. This information is then used to help growers apply enterprise-scale changes through the Conservation Stewardship Program. PCM seeks to engage farmers in Illinois, Iowa, and Kentucky.

As the U.S. Congress considers how best to invest in farmers, improve environmental outcomes, and strengthen America's agricultural economy, the RCPP is a proven, common-sense strategy that will continue our country's commitment to farmer-led environmental stewardship and we look forward to working with you on how to continue to improve and enhance this program.

If you have questions on the Collaborative or its ongoing work with farmers in Illinois, Iowa, and Nebraska, please do not hesitate to contact Sarah Alexander, Keystone Policy Center, at 970-513-5846 or [salexander@keystone.org](mailto:salexander@keystone.org).

Sincerely,

The Midwest Row Crop Collaborative

cc: Members of the U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry