

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 30, 2007

The Honorable Herbert Kohl  
Subcommittee on Agriculture  
Rural Development, Food and Drug  
Administration, and Related Agencies  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Robert F. Bennett  
Subcommittee on Agriculture  
Rural Development, Food and Drug  
Administration, and Related Agencies  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Kohl and Ranking Member Bennett:

We are writing to respectfully request that you provide \$56 million in Fiscal Year 2008 for the Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Program in the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), which would move the existing Councils toward full funding. The President's Fiscal Year 2008 Budget proposes to cut RC&D funding by 74%, eliminating 325 Federal Coordinator positions. We appreciate the strong support of the RC&D program from the Subcommittee in recent years, and we hope that you will continue to support it in the same manner for Fiscal Year 2008.

One of the main benefits of the RC&D program is the promotion of local economies through the leveraging of federal dollars. For every dollar appropriated by Congress for RC&D conservation and economic development projects, local Councils have leveraged an average of eight dollars from other sources. This program consistently returns a positive investment on dollars spent, a rare attribute for a local public/private partnership program.

USDA has indicated that, on average, it takes about \$199,500 to fully fund an RC&D Council. Currently, 375 Councils exist in the U.S., and 37 additional areas seek admittance to the program. The President's proposed cuts to the RC&D program would eliminate 325 Coordinator positions. The work of the RC&D Councils and the federally funded coordinators is especially important in the most rural areas of the country where we've all tried to cultivate local leadership to help them address the economic development and resource challenges facing their communities. We also know that those involved in RC&D are the leaders who are already involved in multiple roles in local government, school boards, churches, and other civic activities. The federal RC&D program helps these local volunteers, who are already stretched thin in many cases, to identify, plan, and address resource and development issues facing their areas.

For these reasons, we encourage you to fund this economically and environmentally beneficial program at \$56 million for Fiscal Year 2008. Thank you for your attention to this request.

Sincerely,



Robert F. Bennett

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