

April 14, 2022

The Honorable Tom Vilsack  
Secretary, U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20228

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

The undersigned organizations, representing millions of Americans' shared commitment to wildlife and habitats, write to express our gratitude for your thoughtful reply to recent publicized requests regarding the removal of certain lands from the Conservation Reserve Program to offset the market effects of the war being waged in Ukraine.

Our organizations, and the broader sportsmen's and conservation communities, unequivocally support efforts to ensure a robust and affordable global food supply, driven by heartfelt concern for those suffering under the continued plight of food scarcity around the world. Yet, we are also steadfast in our commitment to ensuring that steps taken by the USDA and federal agency partners are carried out in a manner that substantively address the issues at hand, and we conclude the opening of CRP acreage to crop production will not achieve that end.

As you have noted, only a small percentage of the nation's prime farmland is enrolled in CRP. Multi-year drought conditions across significant parts of the country limit that figure further. Moreover, the costs of returning CRP acreage to cropland are variable, and often intensive. Beyond input costs of seed, fertilizer, nitrogen inputs, and labor, yields harvested from recent CRP lands historically struggle to achieve that of neighboring fields—even in prime agricultural conditions.

For nearly four decades, the CRP's toolkit of practices has improved soil conditions, enhanced water quality, and sustained vital habitat for countless species on millions of acres of farm and rangeland and has provided an economic and ecological safety net for rural America. Our community understands the need for landowners to be able to respond to changing economic and weather conditions and do what's best for their agricultural operations and continue to support targeted efforts to do so. However, calls for unilateral action to expedite contract expiration threaten to set a dangerous precedent that disregards the programs purposes well beyond today, but years into the future.

We appreciate the difficult task before the USDA in managing the United States' role as a global leader in food production and appreciate your continued measured approach to decision making.

Sincerely,

Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies  
California Waterfowl  
Delta Waterfowl  
Ducks Unlimited  
Izaak Walton League of America

National Deer Association  
National Wild Turkey Federation  
National Wildlife Federation  
North American Grouse Partnership  
Pheasants Forever-Quail Forever  
The Nature Conservancy  
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership  
Wildlife Management Institute