Conservation and the 2013 Senate Farm Bill

**Conservation Compliance** – Crop insurance premium support is the primary element of the farm safety net in the 2013 Senate farm bill. The Senate bill includes a conservation compliance provision, which re-links basic conservation practices with crop insurance premium support eligibility. The goal is to provide a reasonable baseline of stewardship that producers must meet to be eligible for the crop federal insurance program. Conservation compliance has not applied to the federal crop insurance program since 1996 but has applied to nearly all other federal farm programs.

**Sodsaver** – The 2013 Senate farm bill includes a Sodsaver provision, which creates a federal disincentive for converting grassland/native prairie acres that have no recorded cropping history. These acres generally have marginal crop production potential (which is why they have not yet been cropped) and also are prone to increased levels of erosion and nutrient runoff. If a farmer converts acres without a cropping history, he/she would lose 50 percentage points from his/her premium subsidy rate (the taxpayer funded portion of their premium) for the next four years.

**Conservation Programs** – The bill consolidates 23 existing conservation programs into 13 programs. The Senate bill creates two new conservation programs – the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program and the Regional Conservation Partnership Program – out of several of the existing programs. Conservation easement programs, including the Wetlands Reserve Program, Farmland Protection Program and GRP, are repealed and consolidated to create ACEP. The Agricultural Water Enhancement Program, Chesapeake Bay Watershed Program, Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative and Great Lakes Basin Program are repealed by both bills and consolidated into the new RCPP.

(Full text available from Congressional Research Service – The 2013 Farm Bill: A Comparison of the Senate-Reported Bill (S. 954) and House Reported Bill (H.R. 1947) with Current Law)

**Funding for the Conservation Title** – The Senate bill cuts 10-year spending totals for the conservation title by $5.5 billion from baseline, with CRP taking a $2.7 billion reduction, CSP a $2.8 billion reduction, and EQIP a $1.7 billion reduction. (National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition)