Sportsmen’s Priorities for Conservation and Access in the 2018 Farm Bill

Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

• The Regional Conservation and Partnership Program (RCPP) funds partnerships between conservation groups and agricultural producers to enhance soil, water, and wildlife conservation in multi-state or watershed-scale projects.

• State, local, and NGO partners match federal funds 1-to-1, totaling $2.4 billion for conservation between 2014-2018.

• Funds are distributed 40% to multi-state projects, 25% for single state, and 35% in eight Critical Conservation Areas.

AWWG Recommendations

Option 1: Maintain current program structure, but with the following improvements:

• $100 million annual mandatory funding and continue the 7% allocation of Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP), and Healthy Forests Reserve Program (HFRP) funding to RCPP.

• Maintain Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) waiver authority and add EQIP pay cap waiver authority.

• Allow recoverability of a limited portion of project partners’ administrative costs.

For more information, please visit www.trcp.org/farmbill or contact Alex Maggos (amaggos@trcp.org)
AWWG Recommendations cont’d

- Provide NRCS with a fixed percentage of RCPP funds to provide necessary technical assistance and administration prior to awarding grants.
- Maintain Critical Conservation Area, national, and state funding structure, and assess opportunities for refining allocations.
- Allow for flexibility in partner contributions to allow non-federal easement to count as match.
- Allow adjustments to cost share rates according to conservation or environmental performance.
- Promote conservation innovations by expanding the Secretary’s authority to enter into flexible contracts.

Option 2: Replace current structure with a new competitive grant program with partner match requirements.

- Authorized at $250 million annually.
- Maintain CCA, National, and State structure.
- Do not use EQIP, CSP, or ACEP contracts. Allow NGO-approved contracts.
- Require partners to match grant funding.
- Base grants on achievement of verified conservation outcomes.

Partner Project Highlight

Delmarva Whole System Conservation Partnership

- The Nature Conservancy, Ducks Unlimited, and 30+ partners from industry, academia, and Federal, State, and Local governments working to implement in-field and in-stream conservation practices on working lands in the Chesapeake Bay region
- Wetland acres: 312 restored; 551 protected
- Buffer acres: 98 restored; 344 protected
- 424 additional acres lands protected
- 8,200 acres in advanced nutrient management through NRCS