

*Wildlife and Hunting Heritage  
Conservation Council*

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February 16, 2011

The Honorable Tom Vilsack, Secretary  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack,

On behalf of the Wildlife and Hunting Heritage Conservation Council (Council), I am writing with an important request for your consideration. As you know, the proposed House Continuing Resolution (HR 1) contains severe funding cuts to a variety of USDA programs that are of great importance to sportsmen and sportswomen and our collective conservation agenda. In particular, the Council is concerned about the cut to Wetlands Reserve Program acreage enrollment and concomitant federal program funding support, and cuts to Department of the Interior programs including zero-funding for the North American Wetlands Conservation Act and the State Wildlife Grants Program, the deep reduction in funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund, a reduction in funding for Section 6 Endangered Species Act cooperative projects. I know you are well aware of the magnitude of the proposed cuts as well as the conservation benefits of these programs, so I will not take your time with a presentation of supporting data in this letter.

In addition, there is a clean water rider in HR 1 (cf. Section 1747) that would be deleterious to the conservation of wetlands, streams, and other water resources. As you know this would have very serious ramifications for habitats and the waterfowl and other wildlife that depend on them.

The Council respectfully requests that the Administration strongly advocate for the restoration of funding for each of these programs to FY10 enacted levels or reasonable levels proportionate to other cuts. In addition we request your leadership in opposing the clean water rider; we need to deal with such policy issues based on science and in a transparent manner.

Even though HR 1 has a long path before it, the Council believes it is best to take nothing for granted and to be assertive with this "call to action." Funding for the programs noted above is vital to the delivery of fish and wildlife conservation and the interests of sportsmen and women, landowners, communities, industry, and small businesses all across the country.

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Robert Bonnie's presence at this week's Council meeting was greatly appreciated. The Council had a productive meeting, and we would be remiss were we not to express our timely concerns as noted above. Thank you for your consideration of this request, a copy of which was also submitted to Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Tomke". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "J".

John Tomke  
Chair

Cc: Robert Bonnie (USDA)  
Wildlife and Hunting Heritage Conservation Council Members