

February 2, 2024

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
S-221 Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232 Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Republican Leader
U.S. Senate
S-230 Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
Democratic Leader
U.S. House of Representative
H-204 Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Majority Leader Schumer, Republican Leader McConnell, Speaker Johnson, and Democratic Leader Jeffries:

Throughout the western United States, family farms and ranches have facilitated the conservation and stewardship of the region's natural resources while anchoring the region's rich cultural heritage and identity. It is a landscape and a way of life that works for rural economies and resource conservation. Here, private land stewardship is the key to continued conservation innovation, resource and habitat enhancements, and sustainable working land partnerships. It is a region in which farmers and ranchers have been finding ways to successfully balance resource stewardship and their bottom line. Managing water quantity and quality is a key resource concern for the undersigned groups working in the West.

As the West continues to see increasing pressure on its water resources, investing in our water infrastructure is essential to ensure communities, farms, and aquatic ecosystems are resilient to the frequent swings between drought and flood that have accelerated in recent years. One tool that has been especially successful in helping water managers throughout the west is the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Watershed and Flood Prevention Operation (WFPO) program. Funding from this program has been successfully deployed for projects ranging from irrigation modernization, water development for drought-stricken communities and irrigation districts, and flood protection, including flood plain reintegration.

At a time when drought is harming western communities, agriculture, and natural resources, we look for our political leaders to provide us with more tools for responding to this critical challenge, not fewer tools. While we understand that the agriculture appropriations bill faces tremendous demands for funding, drought is ravaging the West and it deserves your full support. We urge you to retain the \$90.4 million for WFPO included in the Senate Agriculture, Rural Development and Drug Administration spending bill. Not only is this funding essential to

addressing pressing water challenges, it will also ensure that preliminary funding from previous spending bills for planning and compliance is able to proceed to construction.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue and for all of your leadership on agriculture and water management issues. Do not hesitate to contact the coalition director, Jeff Eisenberg, if you have any questions on this matter. He can be reached at jeffeisenberg@msn.com, and 571-355-3073.

Sincerely,

Western Agriculture and Conservation Coalition

California Farm Bureau Federation, Environmental Defense Fund, Family Farm Alliance, Farmers Conservation Alliance, Irrigation Association, National Audubon Society, Oregon Water Resources Congress, The Nature Conservancy, Trout Unlimited, Western Growers Association

cc: Hon. Patty Murray, Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee
Hon. Susan Collins, Vice Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee
Hon. Martin Heinrich, Chair, Senate Appropriations Agriculture, Rural Development and Drug Administration Subcommittee
Hon. John Hoeven, Chair, Senate Appropriations Agriculture, Rural Development and Drug Administration Subcommittee
Hon. Kay Granger, Chairwoman, House Appropriations Committee
Hon. Rosa Delauro, Ranking Member, House Appropriations Committee
Hon. Andy Harris, Chairman, House Appropriations Agriculture, Rural Development and Drug Administration Subcommittee
Hon. Sanford Bishop, Jr., Ranking Member, House Appropriations Agriculture, Rural Development and Drug Administration Subcommittee