



# DUCKS UNLIMITED'S Farm Bill in the CHESAPEAKE BAY

## THE NEED

The Chesapeake Bay is a defining part of the landscape of the Mid-Atlantic region. Approximately 15 million people call the watershed home, and the population continues to grow. In the mid-1990s, the Bay was placed on the federal list of "Impaired Waters" under the Clean Water Act, and it remains on both Maryland's and Virginia's state impaired lists, with nearly 60 percent of Maryland's rivers and streams and 90 percent of its bays and estuaries considered impaired. During the past several decades, we have seen declines in environmental health and habitat quality throughout the watershed. For our future, and the future of our children and grandchildren, we need to work together to improve the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem!



## THE PROBLEM

Excess nutrients and sediment

The primary cause of the Bay's impairment is the increased levels of sediment and nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphate. Many of these pollutants enter as runoff from agricultural operations and development.

Loss of habitat

Each year, the Bay watershed loses critical habitat areas to development, including forested uplands, grasslands, wetlands and agricultural areas. When habitat is lost, environmental goods and services are reduced and watershed health declines.

Loss of species

The Bay is home to more than 2,700 species of plants and animals, some of which are suffering due to habitat loss and degradation.

Economically important fish and wildlife, including blue crabs, oysters and waterfowl, are impacted negatively and struggle to keep up with demand.

Loss of a traditional way of life

Agriculture plays an active role in the Bay watershed, contributing heavily to the area economy. Farming traditionally has been an important way of life in the region. However, as the population rises and development pressures increase, farmers are presented with greater incentives to abandon their farms.

## THE SOLUTION

Ducks Unlimited supports a strong Farm Bill Conservation Title to balance land and water conservation with the needs of our farmers. DU is proposing that the new Farm Bill "Farm the Best, Conserve the Rest."



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## DU'S NATIONAL FARM BILL PRIORITIES

<p>Conservation Reserve Program</p> <p>Maintaining a strong and funded CRP targeted at environmentally-sensitive and wildlife-critical areas.</p>	<p>Wetlands Reserve Program</p> <p>Allocating at least 250,000 acres annually, with a nationwide cap of 3,525,000 acres.</p>	<p>Wetlands</p> <p>Supporting measures for preventing the conversion of wetlands to other uses.</p>	<p>Biofuels</p> <p>Ensuring that agriculture policy development for renewable energy is consistent with fish, wildlife, soil and water conservation goals.</p>	<p>Sod Saver</p> <p>Supporting an amendment that removes incentives for those who convert native grassland/prairie to cropland.</p>
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In addition to these priorities, DU encourages keeping the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) available, maintaining the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) and focusing the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) on agricultural practices that benefit wildlife, wetlands and grassland habitat. DU also supports the expansion of the Conservation Security Program (CSP) and the enhancement of active agricultural practices that benefit wildlife, wetlands and grassland habitat on farms and ranches.

## FARM BILL CONSERVATION PROGRAM BENEFITS

**Reduce**  
nutrient loading

Agriculture plays a key role in meeting required reductions in nitrogen and phosphorus, and the Farm Bill conservation provisions can contribute significantly to these goals. Farm Bill programs can help farmers/landowners establish wetlands, riparian buffers and exclusion areas that prevent excess nutrients from entering the watershed.

**Conserve**  
habitat

Several conservation provisions are focused on restoring and conserving habitat on farmland, which provides for healthy populations of fish and wildlife. These benefits allow for recreation, land improvements and economic benefits for the landowner and the community.

**Slow**  
development  
and help **sustain**  
agriculture

By helping farmers protect their lands and supplying them with extra income, conservation provisions can help ensure that farmers are able to keep their lands in production, thus preserving their way of life. Ultimately, the Farm Bill provides encouragement and incentives to help farmers resist selling out to developers and further impacting the Bay.

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## THE GOAL

The watershed-wide goal is to remove the Chesapeake Bay from the impaired list by 2010. The Farm Bill can play a critical role in helping those who care about the Bay achieve this goal. DU encourages farmers and landowners to "Farm the Best, Conserve the Rest" to support the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem. Simply put, strong Farm Bill conservation provisions mean a healthier, cleaner Chesapeake Bay; a productive, sustainable agriculture industry; increased abundance of wildlife and the protection of critical drinking water and open space.

