

October 11, 2012

Chief Dave White  
Natural Resources Conservation Service  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
14th and Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Chief White:

We collectively write to show our support for your Soil Health Initiative. NRCS is making soil health a top priority, and doing so offers prospective benefits to producers across the country. Achieving soil health is part of a systems approach to agriculture production that benefits the landscape, reduces nutrient loading and sediment runoff, increases efficiencies, and sustains wildlife habitat, while providing the potential for cost savings to producers. Soil health minimizes the impacts of severe environmental and weather conditions to provide a consistent food, fuel, feed, and fiber supply for future generations.

Conservation programs such as EQIP and CSP are important to soil health. Conservation programs contribute to soil health by addressing some of the technical and financial risks associated with implementing practices that increase organic matter, water infiltration, water-holding capacity, and nutrient cycling. Though the benefits of voluntary soil health practices may be difficult to quantify, we stand ready to work with NRCS to help identify the costs and benefits of the various practices in order to assist producers when making decisions about whether to adopt them as conservation practices. By using cropping systems that promote soil health, we supply a stable food system and mitigate risks of flooding and drought. From farming to grazing to shipping on the Mississippi River, conservation practices promote soil health.

We as members of commodity and conservation coalitions thank you for today's initiative rollout in Columbus, Ohio. We also look forward to your November 16<sup>th</sup> Soil Health Symposium in Indiana. Please let us know how we can help spread the word!

Sincerely,

National Association of Conservation Districts  
National Association of Wheat Growers  
National Cotton Council  
USA Rice Federation  
National Farmers Union  
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition  
U.S. Cattlemen's Association  
American Farmland Trust  
National Wildlife Federation  
The Nature Conservancy  
Society for Range Management

American Society of Agronomy  
Crop Science Society of America  
Soil Science Society of America  
Soil and Water Conservation Society  
National Association of Resource Conservation &  
Development Councils  
Pollinator Partnership  
Association of State Floodplain Managers  
Environmental Defense Fund  
Environmental and Energy Study Institute