



NATIONAL CONFERENCE *of* STATE LEGISLATURES

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September 3, 2014

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

Re: Department of Defense Matching Funds – Federal Conservation Efforts

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

On behalf of the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) we would like to thank the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), and in particular the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the United States Forest Service, for their help in securing the enactment of section 312 in the FY 2014 National Defense Authorization Act that allows for interagency cooperation in conservation programs among USDA, the Department of Interior (DOI) and the Department of Defense.

Specifically, the ability to use funds provided by the Department of Defense to satisfy matching or cost-sharing requirements of certain conservation programs within USDA or DOI will ensure the protection of military readiness while maintaining benefits for farmers, ranchers and local communities. However, the enactment of this legislation is only the first step. In order for this policy to be as effective as possible, the administration needs to quickly provide the needed guidance to field and regional offices of USDA. NCSL and the states stand ready to be cooperative partners in making the most effective use of this renewed authority to protect military readiness and key installations and ranges while preserving compatible land uses and sustaining wildlife habitat.

Please contact Ben Husch (ben.husch@ncsl.org) or Melanie Condon (melanie.condon@ncsl.org) for any additional information.

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Sincerely,



Senator John McCoy, Washington
Co-Chair, NCSL Natural Resources and
Infrastructure Committee



Senator Ross Tolleson, Georgia
Co-Chair, NCSL Natural Resources and
Infrastructure Committee



Representative Jim Gooch Jr., Kentucky
Co-Chair, NCSL Natural Resources and
Infrastructure Committee



Senator John C. Watkins, Virginia
Co-Chair, NCSL Natural Resources and
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CC: Jason Weller, Chief, Natural Resources Conservation Service

CC: Thomas Tidwell, Chief, U.S. Forest Service