



Senator Debbie Stabenow
Chairwoman, Senate Committee on
Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry
328A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Senator John Boozman
Ranking Member, Senate Committee on
Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry
328A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Representative Glenn “GT” Thompson
Chairman, House Committee on Agriculture
1301 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D. C. 20515

Representative David Scott
Ranking Member, House Committee on
Agriculture
1301 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D. C. 20515

Dear Chairwoman Stabenow, Chairman Thompson, Ranking Member Boozman, Ranking Member Scott, and other interested parties,

The reauthorization of the 2023 Farm Bill represents an important opportunity to expand and improve programs and authorities that are critical to the health and vitality of rural landscapes and communities. The historic conservation and forestry investments enacted by the 117th Congress make this an especially pivotal time to establish the groundwork to ensure federal funding results in meaningful and lasting stewardship outcomes.

The undersigned groups support the following platform, developed by the Rural Voices for Conservation Coalition (RVCC), to address what we see as a crucial yet unmet need for effective use and delivery of Farm Bill programs and authorities: the capacity of community-based entities and locally led collaboratives and partnerships. Community-based entities (e.g. collaborative groups, place-based nonprofits, Intertribal organizations, and special district governments) and locally driven collaborative efforts help convene and connect stakeholders; undertake public outreach and engagement; combine and leverage resources; develop consensus-driven plans and projects; and provide coordination, administration, and implementation capacity – all of which are foundational to the ability for organizations, landowners, Tribes, and communities to access and utilize Farm Bill tools and authorities. Building community-based capacity in particular also has been recognized as a key means of reducing barriers to access and advancing equity within USDA programs.

Our [RVCC Farm Bill Recommendations for Community-based and Collaborative Capacity](https://ruralvoicescoalition.org/issue-papers) (available at: ruralvoicescoalition.org/issue-papers) present a range of avenues to bolster community-based and collaborative capacity through increased access to existing programs and funding sources, as well as new funding or other support. Priorities include:

- **Establish dedicated funding** for place-based or community-based entities working on activities that increase capacity for collaborative conservation activities.
- **Incorporate match flexibility** and **up-front funding** in program design.

- **Strengthen and support strategies for co-management** by local communities and Tribes.
- **Reauthorize the Joint Chiefs Landscape Restoration Partnership**; allow a portion of funding to be used for local capacity building, technical assistance, and project development.
- **Reauthorize the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program** with program design elements and dedicated funding to support associated collaboratives.
- **Support partnership capacity building and participation from community-based entities in the Regional Conservation Partnership Program** via mechanisms facilitating use of program funding for activities like partnership-building, project development, coordination, and public outreach.
- **Modify the Stewardship End Result Contracting Authority** to reinforce the ability to use retained receipts to support collaborative work.
- **Extend Good Neighbor Authority** revenue retention authority to Tribes and counties.
- **Make the 638 contracting authority permanent** and dedicate **funding to TFPA 638 contracts**.
- **Expand the work of Southwest Ecological Restoration Institutes** to more parts of the country.
- **Support workforce development** via concepts like the 21st Century Civilian Conservation Corps.
- Facilitate **training and certification of non-agency Technical Service Providers**.

Our full platform is available online, attached to this letter, or by contacting RVCC staff member Emery Cowan at Emery@WallowaResources.org.

Sincerely,





Haines Economic Development Corporation, Alaska

Hoonah Indian Association, Alaska

Spruce Root, Alaska

The Fire Restoration Group, California

Sierra Forest Legacy, California

Sierra Business Council, California

Sierra Institute for Community and Environment, California

CalWild, California

Watershed Research & Training Center, California

2-3-2 Cohesive Strategy Partnership, Colorado & New Mexico

Mountain Studies Institute, Colorado

Salmon Valley Stewardship, Idaho

Inland Empire Consulting, Idaho & Montana

Blue Mountains Forest Partners, Oregon

Hood River Watershed Group, Oregon

Southern Oregon Forest Restoration Collaborative, Oregon

Southern Willamette Forest Collaborative, Oregon

Siuslaw Institute, Oregon

Sustainable Northwest, Oregon

Wallowa Resources, Oregon

Mt. Adams Resource Stewards, Washington

Western Environmental Law Center, western United States

Heart of the Rockies, central Rockies

Center for Large Landscape Conservation, national

Forest Stewards Guild, national

RuralOrganizing.org Education Fund, national

The Wilderness Society, national

Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, national

Western Landowners Alliance