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Farmers, Conservation Groups Call on Senator Kohl to Restore Bush Cuts to Farm Conservation Programs

Madison, WI-- Just before the July 4 weekend, 17 Wisconsin family farmers and conservation groups sent a letter to Senator Herb Kohl urging him to restore cuts made by President Bush of almost \$400 million to farm policies that protect family farmers, clean water and the land.

The letter focuses on four programs vital to Wisconsin farmers: the Conservation Security Program (CSP) and the Farm and Ranch Land Protection Program (FRPP), the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) and the Value-Added Producer Grant (VAPG) program.

"To help Wisconsin's family farmers, we should keep the Conservation Security Program uncapped as stipulated by Congress in the 2002 farm bill," said Paul Nehring, a grazing beef farmer and director of the grazing advocacy and support group Grassworks. "We need this comprehensive working lands conservation program to support all the other conservation programs like the Wetlands Reserve and Farmland and Ranchland Protection Programs."

The WRP and FRPP consistently rank among the nation's best and most sought-after programs. Wisconsin alone had \$4.4 million and \$11.2 million in backlogged FRPP and WRP applications in FY 2003, respectively, and nationwide the backlog reached \$178 million and \$938 million.

The 17 groups include: Clean Water Action Council of N.E. Wisconsin Inc., Clean Wisconsin, Cornucopia Institute, Friends of Milwaukee's Rivers, 1000 Friends of Wisconsin, Michael Fields Agricultural Institute, Midwest Environmental Advocates, Inc., Midwest Organic & Sustainable Education Service, Northern Thunder, RENEW Wisconsin, River Alliance of Wisconsin, Sierra Club-John Muir Chapter, Wisconsin Farmers Union, Wisconsin Land and Water Conservation Association, Wisconsin Trout Unlimited, Wisconsin Wetlands Association, and Wisconsin Wildlife Federation.