



## RESOLUTION

Adopted March 7, 2018

# Great Lakes Priorities for the 2018 Farm Bill Reauthorization

**Whereas**, agriculture is a vital sector of the economy for each of the eight Great Lakes states; and

**Whereas**, agricultural conservation and rural development promote sustainability of this vital sector while also protecting and enhancing water quality and habitat for wildlife; and

**Whereas**, on September 20, 2017, the Great Lakes Commission accepted an initial *GLC Background Report on 2018 Farm Bill Priorities for the Great Lakes* (Background Report) and directed staff to continue to improve the report as Congress began its work toward reauthorization of the Agriculture Act of 2014, commonly referred to as the Farm Bill; and

**Whereas**, the Great Lakes Commission tasked a subcommittee of experts to produce the Background Report and its successor, *Statement on Priority Recommendations for Conservation Success in the Great Lakes*; and

**Whereas**, the United States Farm Bill represents the largest source of conservation funding for private lands in the federal budget and supports myriad activities essential to continued progress in protecting the Great Lakes from the impacts of nutrient pollution, financing water and wastewater infrastructure improvements in rural communities, enhancing soil health and productivity, and restoring habitat.

**Therefore, Be It Resolved**, that the Great Lakes Commission endorses the *Statement on Priority Recommendations for Conservation Success in the Great Lakes* (key issues as listed below) and urges Congress to incorporate the recommendations therein as deliberations continue toward a reauthorized Farm Bill in 2018.

- Dedicate funding to or through state agencies for edge-of-field monitoring that aligns with ambient water quality monitoring priorities and helps protect public health and safety.
- Enable information sharing to better connect and coordinate federal and state investments in conservation by:
  - Clarifying Section 1619 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 to encourage data-sharing agreements between NRCS and the states, provided that individual farm information is protected; and
  - Authorizing NRCS to provide producers receiving federal assistance with an option to voluntarily allow select conservation practice information to be publicly accessible.
- Improve coordination of USDA conservation investments with other federal and state priorities, including the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative.
- Provide increased funding and flexibility for working lands programs and require NRCS to invite state agencies to participate in annual discussions of Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and Conservation Stewardship Program priorities to assure efficient and effective coordination between federal and state investments in agricultural conservation efforts.
- Consider block grants for states endeavoring to create conservation certification programs or otherwise maximize existing authorities to assist producers in attaining certification. For existing certification programs, continue to work with states to dedicate EQIP funding for farms to overcome barriers to certification.

- Allow for innovation in supplying technical assistance to producers.
- Promote multi-year contracts for EQIP “annual” practices like cover crops to assure a sustainable funding source for growers willing to try a shorter-term practice, but unwilling to risk a loss of funding in subsequent years.
- Enhance RCPP by increasing flexibility for partners so all contributions are considered, while allowing greater use of federal dollars to maximize conservation outcomes with producers. Further, provide opportunities for award recipients within Critical Conservation Areas to convene and discuss best practices and lessons learned.
- Increase the impact of land restoration programs by:
  - Raising the cap on enrolled Conservation Reserve Program acreage
  - Incentivizing the enrollment of less productive land that increases habitat for wildlife and improves water quality leaving while promoting retention of productive land for agriculture.
  - Utilizing land held under easement or other long-term agreements for the management of rural stormwater.
- Amend the Forestry Title to include provisions controlling the introduction and spread of terrestrial invasive species. In addition, Conservation Title programs should support financial assistance for control efforts.
- Sustain or increase funding within the Rural Development Title and simplify processes for rural communities to work together toward regional problems, including infrastructure needs.

**Be It Finally Resolved**, that the Great Lakes Commission recognizes agriculture’s important role in the economy of the Great Lakes region and supports continued emphasis within the Farm Bill on programs fostering a healthy and sustainable system to produce agricultural products for the world and protect the world’s greatest source of fresh water; and

*Adopted at the 2018 Semiannual Meeting of the Great Lakes Commission, March 6-7, 2018 in Washington, D.C.  
The resolution was passed unanimously.*