

# Defenders of Wildlife

## Agricultural Stewardship in America



### THE HEALTHY FARMS, FOOD, AND FUELS ACT OF 2007

Conservation programs provided through the farm bill help provide farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners with the support they need to help protect and conserve land. Land affected by erosion, waterways harmed by farm-related runoff, and wetlands and grasslands are all being restored and protected through incentives in farm bill conservation programs which are key to providing essential habitat for our nation's wildlife.

The Healthy Farms, Food, and Fuels Act provides assistance to help the nation's farmers, ranchers, and foresters in being good stewards of their land. The bill was introduced by Rep. Ron Kind (D-WI) and Rep. Jim Gerlach (R-PA) in the House, (H.R. 1551) and Sen. Robert Menendez (D-NJ) in the Senate (S. 919).

The Healthy Farms, Foods and Fuels Act would:

#### **Promote Strategic Conservation**

An important feature of the bill is that it coordinates federal funding and priorities with the recently completed Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategies to ensure that programs including Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program, Wetlands Reserve Program, Grasslands Reserve Program and the Environmental Quality Incentives Program produce meaningful, strategically-directed results for high priority wildlife and habitats.

#### **Expand the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program**

The bill provides up to \$300 million annually to protect and improve wildlife habitat through incentives for strategic conservation initiatives.

#### **Expand the Wetlands Reserve Program**

Expands the program to 5 million acres and allows the permanent protection of important riparian wetlands throughout the southwest.

#### **Enhance Farm, Forest, and Grassland Protection**

The bill provides \$300 million per year to protect lands threatened by development. Working through the Healthy Forests Reserve Program and the Grassland Reserve Program, the bill will protect 10 million acres of grassland and shrubland, including 2 million acres of important native grasslands.

#### **Improve the Conservation Reserve Program**

Allows more buffers along rivers to filter runoff, improve water quality and protect wildlife habitat.

#### **Enhance Environmental Quality Incentives Program**

Provides funding for energy conservation and strategic wildlife conservation projects. It allows funds to be used to proactively prevent conflicts between wildlife and livestock, and establishes reserved funds which can be used to improve the stewardship of private forest lands.

#### **Proactive Predator Control**

Incorporate proactive predator deterrence measures into the Environmental Quality Incentives Program. Aiding farmers in practices such as livestock carcass removal helps ranchers and farmers by reducing the conflict between threatened predators, like wolves and grizzlies, and livestock.

#### **Cooperative Conservation Education**

Create an education assistance program, which offers loan assistance to agricultural sciences graduates in exchange for their commitment of service to NRCS, and thereby increasing vital conservation technical assistance resources.

A vast majority of our nation's lands are devoted to agriculture and forestry. This bill will help the federal government invest in programs that enable landowners to manage their land in a conservation-conscious way.

