

United States Senate Farm Bill: Water/Wastewater Utility Trade Associations Note Inclusion of Conservation/Drinking Water Measures



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The United States Senate Committee on Agriculture (“Committee”) released its 2018 Farm Bill last week.

The bill is denominated the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (“Farm Bill”).

Two trade associations that represent water (American Waterworks Association [“AWWA”]) and wastewater (National Association of Clean Water Agencies [“NACWA”]) both commented favorably on the Senate’s Farm Bill.

AWWA stated that the Farm Bill “recognizes the importance of protecting drinking water sources from nutrient runoff.” The organization states the bill includes:

- Recognition and emphasis of source water protection across the working lands programs in the conservation title
- Expands opportunities for the Natural Resources Conservation Service to work with water systems
- Authorizes increased incentives for farmers who employ practices that benefit downstream water quality and quantity
- Adds a funding commitment to the Regional Conservation Partnership Program

The NACWA states that the legislation includes several key changes in reforms under the Regional Conservation Partnership Program that were sought by the organization including:

- A streamlined application process
- Expedited contract renewal process for projects that meet specific conditions
- Allowing outreach and technical assistance to count towards a utilities in-kind match
- Greater emphasis on conservation outcomes
- Incentivizes the adoption of key agricultural best management practices through increased Conservation Stewardship program payment levels
- Authorizes a Conservation Stewardship program payment for financial and technical assistance to support the development of comprehensive conservation plans
- Encourages the adoption of conservation activities within conservation plans
- Increases funding for the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program to \$450 million by year 2023

- Requires a United States Department of Agricultural review of conservation practice standards to evaluate the possibilities of increased flexibility

A copy of the [NACWA](#) and [AWWA](#) news releases can be downloaded here. The NACWA news release has a link to the Farm Bill.