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United States Senate

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The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20250-0001

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

Congratulations on your recent confirmation by the Senate. I am pleased that you received an appropriate unanimous vote.

I write today in regard to the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) interim rule issued on Jan. 15 in the Federal Register. In my meeting with you prior to your nomination hearing, I highlighted the importance of Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) and Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) Wetlands Pilot flooded lands provisions.

As I noted then, these provisions will help producers in my state cope with the unprecedented water issues they have experienced over the last 15 years. They also serve dual roles that counter incentives for unauthorized drainage and provide exceptional wildlife habitat.

In particular, I wanted to express a major concern with the interim rule and WRP funding allocations to North Dakota:

- **Water Depth Rule** – The limit on enrolling land with depths over 6.5 feet disqualifies large tracts of land in my state. This limit is unfortunate because some of the most severely impacted producers are disqualified from participation.
- **WRP Allocation for North Dakota** – I believe the current WRP allocation for my state drastically underestimates the amount of demand there will be for WRP with these new enrollment rules. The current amount is based an internal agency query that didn't take WRP rule changes into account. I recommend you increase the allocation for North Dakota to allow for the enrollment of at least 50,000 acres. This will ensure that producers in my state have an opportunity to be enrolled.

I look forward to your response on this issue. If I can be of further assistance, please don't hesitate to contact me or my staff. They can be reached at:

202-224-9484, John Fuher
701-232-8030, Scott Stofferahn

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kent Conrad". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Kent" and last name "Conrad" clearly distinguishable.

KENT CONRAD
United States Senator

KC: fss