

The 2007 Farm Bill



The Farm Bill is perhaps the single most important piece of legislation for the lands, waters and wildlife of our country. The 2007 Farm Bill process comes at a time that is matched to new capacity at the Izaak Walton League with the launch of our new Agricultural Programs structure.

The next major conservation victory

In 2005 the IWLA implemented a refinement and reorganization of our existing Mississippi River, Agricultural Conservation and Fish Kill Advisory Network (FKAN) programs. With a renewed commitment, we have assembled a single, cohesive entity under the banner of Agricultural Programs for the Izaak Walton League of America.

Beginning in 2006, the League's Agricultural Programs staff will launch an effort to shape the dialogue and outcome of the 2007 Farm Bill process. We will conduct a citizen outreach and education campaign designed to foster a new model for agricultural policy and practice in America. This is an opportunity for striking a balance, for ensuring profitability for farms and protection for our resources.

The playing field

The 2007 Farm Bill brings together three key elements that together place conservation at its nexus. These are the influence of international trade rules, modern agriculture's production practices, and economic realities in rural America.

International rules from the World Trade Organization already cap the amount countries may spend on production subsidies, and negotiations are currently ongoing to eliminate such subsidies altogether. Government payments for conservation, however, are exempted from any WTO limits.

In modern agriculture, technology and government subsidies drive mass production and the depletion of natural resources. Our own Fish Kill Advisory Network database has recorded that agricultural pollution was involved in over 68 percent of the events where the type of polluter was identified, and led to 544 fish kills – more than double the kills caused by any other human source.

Economic research from the Federal Reserve Bank and USDA directly states that “traditional (subsidy) programs simply do not provide the economic lift that farming regions need,” and that instead it is natural amenities like “pleasant landscapes and opportunities for outdoor recreation” that create economic growth in rural areas.

In each case, conservation is the answer. And we know conservation.

(over)

IWLA is uniquely positioned to address this opportunity because of our long-standing reputation and success in achieving non-partisan, well-reasoned results. The new Agricultural Programs strategic structure builds on all of this by drawing on:

- Our strong in-house technical and research capability.
- Our staff experience with agricultural policy and USDA programs.
- Our FKAN utility and relationships with a full gamut of premier organizations.
- Our national membership and full-time DC-based staff.

The game plan

We have a compelling message. Good agricultural conservation practices create profitable farms and communities while keeping and enhancing clean water, healthy soil and abundant habitat.

This message evokes fundamental American values that are widely shared across geographic, economic and ideological divides. Farming should be profitable. Natural resources should be conserved not wasted. Public monies should be allocated in a fair and balanced manner. These values frame the four main elements of our strategic plan.

2007 Farm Bill Report and Communications Plan

A continuously refined communications plan will accompany our analysis and publication of proposals to prioritize conservation spending on an even basis with production subsidies.

Target Key Decision Makers and Constituencies

Our strategic plan will utilize our membership and allies to reach key constituencies for key decision makers at key times. Our communication plan will ensure that every communication utilizes the optimal source, delivery mode and target to achieve our goals.

Agricultural Programs on the Web

Our strategic plan will implement an enhanced FKAN through a restructured web presence featuring expanded research tools and a “clearing house” capability for members, partner organizations and the public. This will particularly strengthen our advocacy for conservation in livestock production.

Outreach on the 2007 Farm Bill and FKAN

Our strategic plan will deliver outreach projects, including a series of public forums in coordination with member chapters, partner organizations, farmers, urban residents, and officials.

The outcome

Farm bill legislation developed by policymakers who have clearly heard that farming should be profitable, natural resources should be protected and federal funding should be fair, will be reflected in increased agricultural conservation.