2008 Farm Bill Conservation Title:
Investing in Conservation Programs That Preserve Natural Resources

- Increases total spending on conservation programs by $7.9 billion

- Extends the Popular Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)
  - Authorizes 32 million acres to be enrolled in the program from 2010-2012
  - Includes a new provision to allow retired landowners participating in CRP to modify their contracts if the land is being transferred to a beginning, limited resource, or socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher. This would allow eligible producers to return some of this land to grazing or crop production

- Expands the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)
  - Provides funding to reestablish a baseline of $1.3 billion and extends the program through 2012
  - Increases the maximum enrollment to 3,041,200 acres
  - Creates a Wetlands Reserve Enhancement Program and updates the appraisal process

- Strengthens the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)
  - Increases funding for EQIP by $3.4 billion.
  - Makes conservation practices related to organic certification and transition eligible for payments
  - Improves the evaluation process for applications
  - Establishes the Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP) to help producers achieve water quality goals and address water quantity concerns

- Extends the Conservation Security Program (CSP)
  - Provides $1.1 billion in new funding to enroll nearly 13 million acres per year
  - Expands eligible lands to include private forests
  - Restructures the program to provide conservation stewardship payments that encourage producers to implement additional conservation practices
  - Emphasizes attainment of new conservation benefits

- Provides new resources to protect and restore the Chesapeake Bay Region
  - Provides $438 million in new funding
  - Helps farmers and ranchers meet stringent regulatory requirements and better contribute to the success of the Bay restoration
• Extends and Increases Funding for Farm Protection Program (FPP)
  o Doubles funding for FPP to $773 million
  o Establishes a more user-friendly certification process that will determine eligibility for program funds
  o Reduces pressure for development on farmland

• Continues and Expands the Grassland Reserve Program
  o Adds an additional 1.22 million acres to the Grassland Reserve Program (GRP), which helps landowners protect, restore, and enhance grasslands on their property
  o Allows for short term contracts and easements, and for cooperative agreements

• Creates an Open Fields Program to provide incentives to state governments and Indian tribes to provide public access to private land for hunting and fishing
  o Provides $50 million in funding for 2009 through 2012

• Establishes payment limitations for conservation programs
  o Limits EQIP payments to $300,000 over 6 years, but allows the Secretary to grant waivers to $450,000 in particular cases
  o Clarifies the pay-out rate for WRP contracts
    ▪ Easements of less than $500,000 paid over 1 to 30 years
    ▪ Easements of greater than $500,000 paid over 5 to 30 years
    ▪ Allows Secretary to grant a waiver and provide lump sum payment on easements over $500,000

• Improves cooperation between USDA and outside organizations
  o Creates the Cooperative Conservation Program Initiative (CCPI) to better provide assistance to producers
  o Allows State/local governments, producer groups, and Indian tribes to help carry out programs

• Reauthorizes the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)
  o Increases cost-share assistance on long-term agreements and provides technical assistance and cost-share assistance to establish and improve wildlife habitat

• Extends the Small Watershed Rehabilitation Program through 2012
  o Reauthorizes the program and includes $100 million in funding
  o Provides technical and financial assistance for the rehabilitation of existing small watershed projects that may include upgrading or removing the dams

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