

AWWA cheers measures in Senate Farm Bill that aim to protect drinking water sources

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(DENVER) – The American Water Works Association, the largest association of water professionals in the world, today applauded the U.S. Senate Agriculture Committee for introducing a bipartisan Farm Bill on Friday that recognizes the importance of protecting drinking water sources from nutrient runoff.

AWWA singled out Chairman Pat Roberts, Ranking Member Debbie Stabenow, and Sen. Sherrod Brown for their commitment to protecting source water. The bill, the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018, includes several key measures advanced by AWWA over the past two years.

The bill was introduced just days before an estimated 12,000 water professionals will gather in Las Vegas, Nevada, for AWWA’s Annual Conference and Exposition (ACE18), which runs today through Thursday. Source water protection is among the key areas of focus at the conference.

The downstream and public health benefits of conservation programs funded through the Farm Bill are extremely important to all Americans who depend on clean drinking water. The bill includes an important recognition and emphasis of source water protection across the working lands programs in the conservation title. It expands opportunities for the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to work with water systems and authorizes increased incentives for farmers who employ practices that benefit downstream water quality and quantity.

The bill makes a strong commitment to overall conservation by maintaining funding at current levels. It also makes an added funding commitment to the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) and emphasizes source water protection in the program.

“We appreciate the work the Senate Agriculture Committee accomplished,” said Tracy Mehan, AWWA executive director of government affairs. “Our hope is to work with the committee as the bill works its way through the legislative process to include a reservation of funds for source water protection as is included in Rep. Marcia Fudge’s bill, the Collaborative Water and Soil Enhancement Act of 2018, and in the

House version of the Farm Bill.”

AWWA began to engage in the Farm Bill process over two years ago to bring more attention to the issue of protecting sources of drinking water through conservation practices funded by the Farm Bill. “We believe it’s important for USDA to emphasize protection of drinking water sources as part of its overall water quality and water quantity mission,” Mehan said.

AWWA created a whiteboard animation video to more clearly illustrate how the Farm Bill’s conservation programs are key to protecting drinking water sources. It is available on AWWA’s [YouTube channel](#).

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Established in 1881, the American Water Works Association is the largest nonprofit, scientific and educational association dedicated to managing and treating water, the world’s most important resource. With approximately 51,000 members, AWWA provides solutions to improve public health, protect the environment, strengthen the economy and enhance our quality of life.