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September 15, 2025

Secretary of Agriculture
Brook L. Rollins
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington D.C., 20250

Dear Secretary Rollins:

I am reaching out to express my deep concern regarding the rescission of Farm Bill funding for the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Specifically, funding has been rescinded from the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) to support the Legacy Land Conservancy, which is located in my district. In June 2025, Legacy Land Conservancy and partners with the Southeast Michigan Conservation Coalition were informed that their \$24.6M RCPP award to preserve 4,000 acres of forest and farmland in southeast Michigan had been rescinded by USDA.

A majority of the awarded funds were to be used directly by the Southeast Michigan Conservation Coalition to strategically purchase conservation easements on private agricultural and forest lands, which help ensure that the land remains in agricultural production permanently.

The USDA's decision to rescind the funding is especially concerning given that funding was made available by the 2024 Farm Bill that was appropriated by Congress. While the funding was made available by the Farm Bill, USDA rescinded Southeast Michigan Conservation Coalition's award on the basis that it had been reclassified as Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) funding. On July 10th, 2025, the Legacy Land Conservancy filed an appeal in response to the Administration's decision to rescind this vital funding. I strongly urge USDA to give this appeal serious consideration, as programs have been depending on this funding.

Per Legacy Land Conservancy's appeal, NRCS rescinded some, but not all, of the conditional awards it had issued in October 2024 under its Regional Conservation Partnership Program Classic Notice of Funding Opportunity for FY 2024 (No. USDA-NRCS-NHQ-RCPP-24-NOFO0001354). After funding for several of these projects was rescinded, USDA announced funding for a subset of the original NRCS RCPP awardees, which does not include the project submitted by the Southeast Michigan Conservation Coalition. USDA completed some sort of regrading of the proposals which resulted in only 28 projects being funded, though 92 had been initially selected by the agency. USDA has not disclosed the unaccountable methodology of this regrading, nor did the agency issue a revised NOFO to instruct organizations to revise proposals in order to comply with the revised award criteria implemented by USDA.

For five decades, Legacy Land Conservancy has been dedicated to strong protection of both private and public lands, advocating for water quality, habitat corridors, agricultural production, and trails that connect pieces of recreational land to one another. Funding the Legacy Land Conservancy goes far beyond enabling the organization to do this important work. It represents a meaningful investment in Michigan's small businesses, local governments, farmers and ranchers, and conservation leaders.

Legacy Land Conservancy disagrees with USDA's determination to rescind the funding award based on the following arguments:

- NRCS's rescission decision satisfies both components of an NAD-appealable determination under 7 C.F.R. § 11.6(a)(2); and,
- Legacy Land Conservancy's grant program is aligned with USDA and NRCS RCPP goals and met the rigorous criteria established for successful grant awards; and,
- Legacy Land Conservancy negotiated the required Program Partnership Agreement (PPA) diligently and in good faith; and,
- USDA acted arbitrarily and capriciously, in violation of Uniform Guidance and the Administrative Procedures Act.

I strongly urge that USDA reconsider its decision to rescind this grant funding, and request that there is full and fair consideration of the appeal that was filed.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress