

American Woodcock Society, Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies, Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation, Delta Waterfowl, Ducks Unlimited, National Wildlife Federation, Pheasants Forever, Quail Forever, Ruffed Grouse Society, Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership

October 15, 2020

The Honorable Kevin Norton, Acting Chief  
Natural Resources Conservation Service  
1400 Independence Ave.,  
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Chief Norton,

The undersigned organizations would like to thank you for your recent announcement during the House Agriculture Committee's Hearing on October 1<sup>st</sup> of efforts to address the concerns raised by the sportsmen's and forestry communities regarding the eligibility criteria for nonindustrial private forest lands in the Natural Resource Conservation Service's (NRCS) Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) Application for Public Funding (APF). We appreciate the amendments to the APF and believe that these steps will remedy issues with the eligibility criteria that were previously excluding nonindustrial private forest lands from program eligibility.

The cooperative nature of the RCPP leverages partner funding from diverse matching sources with dollars received through RCPP grants to implement critical forest conservation practices. Unfortunately, the forest land eligibility criteria outlined in the original APF created confusion among forest landowners and would have likely precluded eligibility for some forest lands that would have otherwise been eligible for program funding. Removing this language and extending the application period will allow nonindustrial private forest lands to be eligible for RCPP, which is consistent with prior practice and administration of the Program.

Given the important conservation benefits associated with the RCPP, we again thank you for your swift response to ensure that the eligibility criteria for nonindustrial private forest lands included in the APF language is corrected and applicants receive accurate advice about the eligibility requirements. We appreciate the NRCS's work that benefits America's forest resources, wildlife, and sportsmen, and we look forward to staying engaged with the process to ensure that critical forest conservation lands are eligible for RCPP.

Sincerely,

American Woodcock Society  
Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies  
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation  
Delta Waterfowl  
Ducks Unlimited

National Wildlife Federation  
Pheasants Forever  
Quail Forever  
Ruffed Grouse Society  
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership

cc:

The Honorable Sonny Perdue, Secretary, United States Department of Agriculture  
The Honorable Bill Northey, Under Secretary, USDA Farm Production and Conservation