

TO THE U.S. CONGRESS:

The recommendations contained in this report are offered to assist you in the upcoming debate on agricultural conservation, which will be a key part of the 2007 Farm Bill reauthorization. Over 40 listening sessions, involving more than a thousand individuals and stakeholder organizations in the Chesapeake Bay six-state watershed, were held in the spring and summer of 2005. We transmit the ideas formed from those discussions as a starting point for further dialogue and refinement as you work to develop the content of the 2007 Farm Bill. We believe the extensive farmlands of the Chesapeake Bay region, draining into the largest estuary in the United States, are important places to deal with farm conservation program reforms. Further, the measures that we identify to meet the dual goal of strengthening agriculture and improving water quality in the Chesapeake have application to the multitude of other fragile and recovering watersheds in the nation.

Thank you for your consideration of these recommendations. We offer you our continuing assistance in refining these and other conservation concepts as you address the reauthorization of this complex and important legislation.

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