



TENNESSEE WILDLIFE RESOURCES AGENCY

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March 16, 2009

Assessment Programs Division
 Wetlands Reserve Program Comments
 P.O. Box 2890
 Room 6819-S
 Washington, D.C. 20013

RE: Federal Register Docket Number NRCS-IFR-08013, Proposed Rule affecting changes to the Wetlands Reserve Program

Dear Sir or Madam:

The Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency appreciates the opportunity to comment on the proposed rule affecting changes to the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) as provided by the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (2008 Farm Bill)

We commend the USDA and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) for continuing to offer the WRP and for striving to improve the size, cost-effectiveness, and wildlife benefits of this program. WRP has been a successful program in Tennessee, particularly in west Tennessee in providing habitat for both nesting and wintering waterfowl, shorebirds and many other wildlife whose life cycle depends at least partly on quality wetlands. The program also provides a viable alternative to Tennesseans that farm less profitable wetland soils. The impact of increased habitat and hunting opportunities also provide significant economic benefits in many of the rural counties where WRP land is located.

We also commend USDA and NRCS for changing the "Yellow Book" appraisal standards to a method that we envision will be much more attractive for Tennessee landowners to participate in WRP, and for increasing the emphasis of WRP and other 2008 Farm Bill programs to address wildlife species' needs identified in State Wildlife Action Plans.

TWRA is committed to assisting NRCS to help advertise and deliver this program. In fact, we have a current agreement for a cooperative biologist (TWRA biologist that works out of an NRCS office) that is focused on the promotion, implementation, and status reviews of WRP in west Tennessee. We believe (and also believe our state NRCS would agree) that this cooperative position is and will continue to be an effective means to realize the full benefits of the program here. We urge USDA to continue to look for ways

The State of Tennessee

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 JW