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THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

THE DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

**U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.S. Department of Interior  
Memorandum of Understanding Regarding the Implementation of the  
2002 Farm Bill Conservation Provisions**

**Background**

Since 1985, the Farm Bill has been a significant vehicle for the U.S. Congress to establish legislative authorities and direction that promote and facilitate sustaining farm profitability, conserving natural resources, and protecting the environment. The 2002 Farm Bill is expected to place an even greater emphasis on the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) existing conservation programs, while authorizing several new and innovative approaches to meeting emerging conservation issues.

USDA and the U.S. Department of Interior (DOI) share many common goals and a dedication to natural resource protection. Both organizations have a long history of working cooperatively to help individuals and communities address their natural resource concerns and protect the Nation's environment. At the same time, each agency has different authorities for providing that assistance to the public.

**Actions and Activities**

USDA's Natural Resources and Environment and Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services Mission Areas and Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service, and other agencies as appropriate, are establishing an MOU whereby DOI and USDA will coordinate, to the extent practicable, on activities that complement USDA's efforts to implement the 2002 Farm Bill as it relates to conservation programs.

USDA and DOI have designated senior staff to participate in this process. This interaction is founded on an expectation that both in Washington and in field activities the agencies will engage in a wide array of activities, including information sharing and exchange of valuable perspectives as USDA implements 2002 Farm Bill conservation programs.

The following specific activities will be carried out by the agencies:

- In development of the new programs in the 2002 Farm Bill, USDA will provide DOI officials with information regarding regulations (if applicable), funding disbursement and other activities of the new programs to maximize effectiveness both at the Department level and in the field.
- For both reauthorized programs and new programs contained under the 2002 Farm Bill, the two agencies will communicate, to the extent practicable. In headquarters, senior political and career leadership will ensure that existing coordination opportunities are being fully utilized, and that DOI and USDA field staff are developing and implementing projects with levels of collaboration within program objectives.
- Where a specific statutorily stipulated role is identified, such as DOI's role under the Wetlands Reserve Program, this agreement shall be the means by which the agencies collaborate to ensure efforts are underway to meet the agencies' statutory role.
- On an ongoing basis, DOI will provide data and information to support any DOI concerns to USDA counterparts in headquarters. This shall be carried out through regular meetings and other means of information exchange.
- USDA will explain implementation matters that may give rise to issues, identify additional data and information needed, and assess the data or information provided by DOI.
- DOI recognizes that the authority to design and carry out implementation of the conservation provisions of the 2002 Farm Bill rests solely with USDA, as does the responsibility for the implementation decisions. DOI and USDA agree to protect the confidentiality of their joint discussions and materials exchanged as cooperating Federal agencies.
- Additional opportunities for collaboration on projects related to land stewardship and conservation – but not directly linked to the Farm Bill – should be identified as appropriate. Decisions on actions related to such projects shall be determined by the Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Conservation at USDA and the Assistant Secretary for Policy, Management and Budget at DOI.

  
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