

September 23, 2024

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chair
House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Susan Collins
Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Cole, Ranking Member DeLauro, Chair Murray, and Vice Chair Susan Collins:

As you work to finalize Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 appropriations legislation, the undersigned organizations encourage you to provide at least \$175.5 million in the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) budget for the Clean Water Act Section 319 Nonpoint Source Management Program (hereafter '319 Grant Program') in the final agreement. The timely approval of this funding is crucial to supporting the efforts of our conservation workforce on the front lines of protecting and improving our nation's waterways.

The 319 Grant Program awards funding to the states, territories, and tribes to assess, monitor, and take action to protect water resources, with a focus on mitigating impacts from nonpoint sources of pollution. Dedicated conservation workers rely on the 319 Grant Program to carry out essential projects that address pollution and enhance water quality in communities across the country. Insufficient funding and delays in funding approval significantly impact their ability to plan and execute these projects effectively. The national success of the 319 Grant Program is a testament to their hard work and dedication. We urge you to prioritize timely passage of appropriations legislation containing at least \$175.5 million for the 319 Grant Program to prevent significant detrimental impacts on the water quality in states, territories, and tribes across the country.

The 319 Grant program has delivered significant environmental improvements nationwide. Projects funded by the program have successfully restored impaired stream channels, reduced harmful heavy metal contamination, and improved water quality in agricultural regions affected by livestock runoff. By implementing best management practices such as streambank stabilization, erosion control, and water treatment systems, these efforts have led to measurable reductions in pollutants like E. coli, lead, and cadmium, restoring ecosystems and enhancing public safety. These achievements highlight the program's effectiveness in fostering collaboration among local communities, government agencies, and various stakeholders, resulting in cleaner and healthier water bodies. Without these funds, local governments and organizations would struggle to implement the necessary measures to protect and improve water quality in their regions.

Continued strong and timely funding for the 319 Grant Programs is essential for conservation workers to maintain and build upon the success they have achieved. Award postponements compress the timeframes for states to plan and implement their budgets, reducing a full year of

Careful planning to just six months. An accelerated timeline may also rush project decisions, compromising the reliability and effectiveness of state-level budgetary allocations. Providing stability and predictability for state governments allows the Clean Water Act to build on the successful utilization of the 319 Grant Programs and ensures conservation workers can continue their vital work without unnecessary disruptions.

In 2024, the EPA released updated guidance for the 319 Grant Program in response to stakeholder feedback. The EPA's updated guidance provides increased funding to tribal governments, optimizes water quality data reporting, considers climate change impacts, creates watershed finance partnerships, and removes the cap on watershed protection projects. These enhancements will enable the 319 Grant Program to achieve even greater results, further empowering our conservation workers across the U.S.

Thank you for your continued support of the 319 Grant Program for States and Territories under the Clean Water Act. By investing \$175.5 million in FY 2025 and prioritizing the timely passage of the upcoming federal budget, you are investing in the hardworking individuals who protect and improve our water resources.

Sincerely,

American Farmland Trust
American Rivers
American Society of Agronomy
Amphibian and Reptile Conservancy
Crop Science Society of America
Izaak Walton League of America
Louisiana Hypoxia Working Group
National Association of Conservation Districts
National Association of State Departments of Agriculture
National Wildlife Federation
Pollinator Partnership
Soil and Water Conservation Society
Soil Science Society of America