



Chairman Glenn "GT" Thompson
Conservation, Research, and Biotechnology Subcommittee
"For the purpose of receiving testimony from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service and Farm Service Agency"
Opening Statement
May 23, 2023

Remarks as prepared for delivery:

"Thank you, Chairman Baird and Ranking Member Spanberger. I appreciate today's hearing and the opportunity to hear from Chief Cosby and Administrator Ducheneaux.

"Conservation has always been a high priority for me. I'm proud of the great work the Committee has done in the past on this important title and I'm hopeful that we will make further improvements in the 2023 Farm Bill.

"Historically, we start with the question of what is working and what can be improved, and I look forward to hearing from our witnesses on that very concept. In addition to that question, I have serious concerns whether the Department can effectively and efficiently administer an unprecedented and uncoordinated increase in funding showered on you by this Administration and the past Democratic Congress.

"With the IRA funding, I believe we must have a bipartisan, bicameral discussion on the best way to administer this funding. We must admit that some of the funding is unrealistic and would be better used by bringing it into the baseline and spread out over a more realistic timeframe. I also think we must remove the climate restrictions and let the locally-led model continue without limitation.

"As I did last fall, let me briefly summarize some of my priorities. We can't prioritize one natural resource concern over all others and we shouldn't prioritize one solution above all others. Our system of conservation delivery works because it is voluntary, incentive-based, and programs locally led. That locally led component is important because different regions have different local natural resource concerns that need to be addressed.

"Second, we need to emphasize working lands. There is a reason why EQIP is the most popular and effective program at getting conservation on the ground.

"Third, we need to encourage innovative solutions throughout the conservation title. Agriculture has always relied on science, technology, and innovation, and we should encourage that throughout the Farm Bill. Whether that is through innovations like precision agriculture or innovative ideas like soil health grants to the states, we need to think innovatively.

“Fourth, we need to encourage more work with the private sector and look to expand technical capacity where we can. Legislation such as Chairman Baird’s and Ranking Member Spanberger’s Increased TSP Access Act of 2023 are critical to addressing this issue.

“Fifth, we should be supporting working forests in the conservation title. We should encourage forestlands to be part of Title II and reforms to allow for better management of our national forests.

“Finally, as I said at the beginning, we need to look at what’s working and what needs improvement. We need to look at ways to simplify and modernize our programs. A lot of the stakeholder input I hear is that RCPP and CRP need to be evaluated and improved to ensure the original principles of the programs continue to be fulfilled.

“With that, I again appreciate today’s hearing and welcome our witnesses. Chief Cosby and Administrator Ducheneaux, thank you for being here today. We look forward to your testimony and today’s conversation.”