

March 7th, 2012

Subcommittee Ranking Member Rep. Sam Farr

"Good morning. I want to recognize:

- Mr. Harris Sherman, Under Secretary, Natural Resources and Environment, Department of Agriculture
- Mr. Dave White, Chief, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Department of Agriculture
- Mr. Michael Young, Budget Officer, Department of Agriculture.

"Thank you for being here. I also want to take the time to thank you for your efforts, and that of your staff, to protect and preserve our country's natural resources.

"The United States is home to some of the most awe-inspiring natural environments in the world. From lush forests to pristine marine sanctuaries, these natural habitats have given Americans unique places to connect with the great outdoors.

"Our nation also boasts an abundance of productive agriculture land, which has helped fuel our country's robust agriculture industry.

"From the Great Plains, to the Central Valley and Coast of California, agriculture is feeding millions of Americans and numerous local economies.

"But we know resources are not infinite.

"What today are acres of productive agriculture land can tomorrow become an infertile wasteland.

"Vibrant and nutrient rich waterways can become polluted and uninhabitable for wildlife and outdoor enthusiast.

"And the water that we depend on can too easily become contaminated without the proper protocols.

"Therefore, we all understand the importance of conservation, and the efforts the Department of Agriculture is spearheading to protect these vital resources.

"We need to work with farmers to preserve farmland.

"We need to invest to conserve and restore what has already been damaged.

"And we need to do it a way that delivers results and clear measures of progress.

"The actions we take today to preserve our natural resources will be defined by what we leave for our children and grandchildren.

"It is up to us to decide what legacy we want to leave behind for future generations.

"I am encouraged by the actions the Obama Administration has taken through the America's Great Outdoors Initiative to work with local and state agencies to not only preserve the outdoors, but to connect people with them.

"This is a great step forward, and I am confident this will help generate the awareness and action we need.

"But I believe there is more we can do. From increasing efficiencies to improving effectiveness, if we work together we can make scarce resources go a long way.

"I hope that today, we can have a frank conversation on how we make that happen.

"Thank you again for being here, and I look forward to your testimony."

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