

# **Conservation and Land Management**

## **Environmental Services Board**

### **Charter**

#### **I. PURPOSE**

The Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (Farm Bill) passed May 22, 2008, directs the Secretary of Agriculture to establish technical guidelines and science-based methods to measure the environmental services benefits from conservation and land management activities in support of emerging environmental services markets.

To facilitate full consultation, leverage expertise, and ensure consistency across the Federal Government, a government-wide Environmental Services Board is established. The purpose of this Board is to assist the Secretary in adopting the technical guidelines to be used by the Federal Government to assess environmental service benefits of conservation and land management in order to facilitate the participation of farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners in emerging environmental services markets. The Board's guidelines will focus on scientifically rigorous and economically sound methods for quantifying the air quality, water quality, greenhouse gases, wetlands and endangered species benefits of such conservation and land management practices.

#### **II. BACKGROUND**

Market-based environmental approaches are designed to provide participants the flexibility to determine the actions that have the lowest cost. In many instances market-based approaches have been shown to result in more cost-effective achievement of natural resource conservation and environmental goals augmenting traditional regulatory approaches and accelerating the rate of environmental improvements.

Many conservation and environmental benefits produced on U.S. farms and private forest lands do not have an assigned value in the market place or lack a private market altogether. While private markets for environmental goods and services are emerging, their viability has been hampered by several barriers. The Federal Government can help overcome these barriers and promote the establishment of markets for agricultural and forestry conservation activities by creating uniform metrics.

A single set of clear and verifiable metrics for quantifying environmental benefits of

practices in agriculture and forestry will reduce barriers to the adoption of market driven environmental services. To be fully effective, the new guidelines must meet the needs of the multiple Federal agencies, and other public and private stakeholders. These guidelines will also have value beyond emerging private sector markets for environmental services; Federal, State and local governments can use them to assess and improve the efficiency of conservation programs.

The 2008 Farm Bill directs the Secretary of Agriculture to establish technical guidelines that outline science-based methods to measure the environmental services benefits from conservation and land management activities in order to facilitate the participation of farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners in emerging environmental services markets. The establishment of such guidelines, including metrics and methodologies for measuring the performance of agricultural and forestry practices, will bring new rigor for quantifying the benefits of conservation practices and will aid in the efficient implementation of cooperative conservation programs and activities.

### **III. NAME AND DURATION**

- The name of this board shall be the Conservation and Land Management Environmental Services Board.
- The Board shall be rechartered every 5 years.

### **IV. OFFICERS AND MEMBERSHIP**

- The Secretary shall serve as Chair of the Board. The Chairman of the Council on Environmental Quality and the Administrator of the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (OIRA) in the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) will serve as vice-chairs.
- The Board shall have at least nine members representing diverse interests in natural resource issues. The Board membership shall comprise the Secretaries of the Interior, Energy, Commerce, Transportation, and Defense or their designees, the Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisors, the Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy, the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency and the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works.
- The Board shall meet at such intervals as is necessary to carry out its functions but no less than two times per year. The Chair is authorized to adjust the frequency of meetings based on need.
- The Board shall require a quorum consisting of the Chair and both Vice Chairs and at

least two-thirds of its appointed members to execute its duties.

## **V. DUTIES OF THE BOARD**

The Board shall:

- To the maximum extent practicable, reach decisions on a consensus basis.
- Recommend to the Secretary of Agriculture a set of priority environmental services for which benefits will be researched and analyzed, and guidelines developed.
- Recommend to the Secretary of Agriculture current Federal department and agency programs that quantify or monetize environmental services benefits or otherwise utilize market-based environmental approaches.
- Recommend to the Secretary of Agriculture consistent guidelines for scientifically rigorous and economically sound methods for estimating environmental goods and services provided by conservation and land management, including metrics for data quality, verification, reporting, and estimation methods.
- Leverage technical expertise and capabilities in other Federal agencies and departments to ensure developed guidelines are credible and defensible.
- Respond to requests from Federal departments and agencies to help incorporate the new guidelines and science-based methods into their programs and operational responsibilities.
- Ensure that sound economic and scientific theory, including the latest scientific and technical information, informs the process.
- Enable a broad array of stakeholder, private sector and non-governmental organizations to provide input.
- Encourage agencies represented on the Board to abide by the decisions of the Board. However, the administration of statutory authority governing all agency programs and regulatory actions remains with the agency involved.
- Include and fully engage other Cabinet or agency officials and existing interagency working groups as needed if there are any Board actions or activities that have implications beyond the scope of the Farm Bill.

## **VI. ADMINISTRATIVE PROVISION AND STAFF SUPPORT**

- A Secretariat shall be established and located within USDA.
- The Secretariat shall perform the administrative and technical functions required to support Board activities.
- The Secretariat shall be headed by a Director who reports directly to the Secretary of Agriculture.

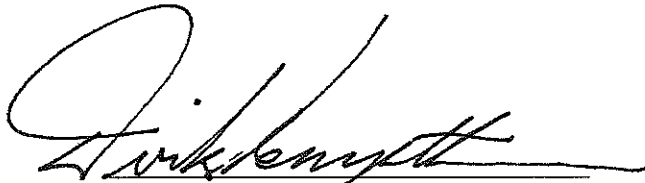
#### **VII. FEDERAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

- A Federal Advisory Committee (FAC) shall be established to advise the Secretary of Agriculture.
- The Secretary of Agriculture shall advise the Board of the activities and recommendations of the Advisory Committee.
- The FAC shall include, at a minimum, representatives from State natural resource agencies, environmental quality agencies, agriculture departments, tribal governments, farmers, ranchers and forest landowners representing the various regions of the nation, conservation and environmental organizations, and others as determined by the Chair of the Board.
- The Secretariat Director or his or her designee will supervise and serve as Chair of the FAC.

#### **VIII. REPORTS**

- The Board shall submit annual reports to the President.

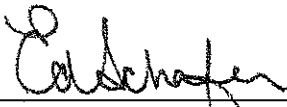
Date Signed 12/05/2008



DIRK KEMPTHORNE  
Secretary of the Interior



JOHN H. MARBURGER, III  
Director  
Office of Science and Technology Policy



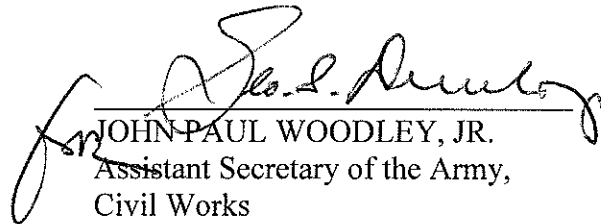
EDWARD T. SCHAFER  
Secretary of Agriculture



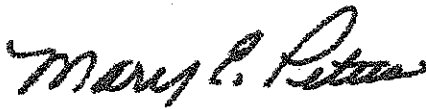
SUSAN E. DUDLEY  
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CARLOS M. GUTIERREZ  
Secretary of Commerce



JOHN PAUL WOODLEY, JR.  
Assistant Secretary of the Army,  
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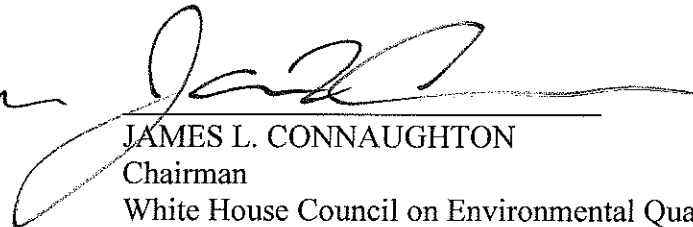
MARY E. PETERS  
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Council of Economic Advisors



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