



BIRD SAVER: Conservation Priorities for the 2026 Farm Bill

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Healthy rangelands provide conservation services, including water filtration and storage, erosion control, air quality, and nutrient cycling. They are vital to recovering grassland bird populations.

American Bird Conservancy (ABC) will work with Congress and the Administration to pass a 2026 Bird-Friendly Farm Bill that:

- Encourages broader conservation easements use to protect key habitats for birds
- Incentivizes rangeland rest in grazing systems to conserve birds, help ranchers, and expand grassland-conserving policies
- Encourages partnership-driven, incentive-based conservation.
- Increases NRCS and partner technical assistance capacity
- Reasserts wildlife as a co-equal priority in the Farm Bill, along with soil and water conservation
- Prioritizes diverse stands of native plants, limits the use of non-native plants, and reinforces the National Seed Strategy
- Protects the ability for states and sub-state entities to regulate the use of pesticides in a science-backed manner which supports wildlife conservation
- Provides innovative opportunities for producers to reduce their reliance on synthetic chemicals

Top Priorities

Rest-Recover-Recapture — We are recommending legislation to better incentivize grazing rest. Periodic rest improves drought resilience through greater root depth; plant species diversity; system sustainability; soil health; and increases forage production and profitability.

Approximately 30 percent of the U.S. is rangeland (~770 million acres), mostly in the West. Rangelands are highly diverse, and provide livestock forage and habitat for many wildlife species. Healthy rangelands provide conservation services, including water filtration, erosion control, and nutrient cycling. They are vital to recovering grassland bird populations.

Expanding incentives for conservation will help ranchers while adding substantial habitat quality for grassland birds:

In working with ranchers, conservationists and Members of Congress, we are recommending legislation that will incentivize more robust rest-rotational grazing systems in the Grassland CRP by offering an additional payment for acres given a break from grazing as a part of a voluntary plan. We are seeking support in the Senate to include the Grassland CRP Durability Act in their version of the Farm Bill (*see Figure 1 for an example*).



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Helping Hands — We recommend increasing and stabilizing conservation delivery capacity in NRCS offices through internal staffing and partnerships. Producers need NRCS and partners to provide adequate technical assistance, which requires predictable funding and staffing. Without Technical Assistance, it is impossible to deliver quality conservation planning and funding to producers. ABC seeks Congressional support for requiring basic funding for Conservation Technical Assistance in all county offices.

Strengthening the Conservation Reserve Program — We recommend reauthorizing and increasing Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) enrollment to 70 million acres. CRP provides far-reaching benefits. It has improved conditions for ground-nesting birds by increasing nesting and brood-rearing success. Support House language to codify State Acres for Wildlife (SAFE).

Preserve State Authority to Safeguard Wildlife — We recommend excluding any language that

would preempt the ability for states and sub-state entities to regulate pesticides when federal protections fall short. Language which would extend the EPA’s “chemistry

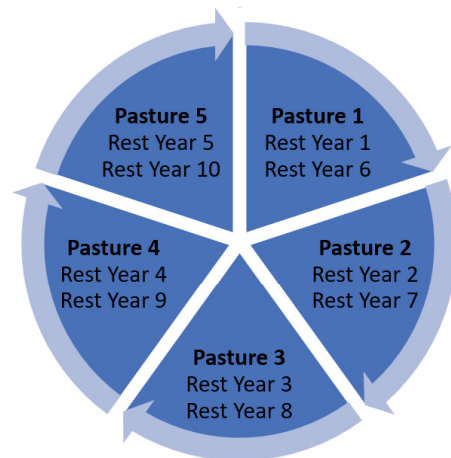


Figure 1. Example of cyclic rest in a 10-year grazing plan.

Program Recommendations

Regional Conservation Partnership Program

- Continue to provide RCPP as a stand-alone program; include Rest-Restore-Recapture options.
- Reauthorize unlimited Alternative Funding Arrangement projects.
- Eliminate the arbitrary administrative cap on partner Technical Assistance (TA) and increase to 30%.

Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)

- Authorize funding for restoration and management activities to maintain taxpayer investment and authorize USDA to hold Agricultural Land Easements (ALE) in certain circumstances.
- Encourage the restoration of native wetland and grassland vegetation and hydrology.

Forest Conservation Easement Program

- Support House of Representatives language that authorizes and funds — separate from ACEP — a Forest Conservation Easement Program.
- Include native forest plant community restoration and working forest components.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program

- Include Rest-Restore-Recapture options.
- Maintain 10% minimum funding for wildlife; ensure that practices achieve State Wildlife Action Plan objectives.

Forestry Title

- Include the House supported Forest Conservation Easement Program (FCEP) in the Senate Bill.

Grassland Conservation, Sod saver, and Conservation Compliance

- Establish a federal grant program similar to the North American Wetland Conservation Act to support grassland conservation if that act does not become law.
- Expand the Sod saver provision nationwide.
- Eliminate incentives that lead to breaking native sod in all programs and titles.

Pesticide Regulation

- Preserve state and sub-state authority to regulate pesticides
- Oppose pesticide label uniformity provisions
- Retain current EPA “chemistry cliff” timeline
- Incentivize use of seeds free of prophylactic insecticide coatings.



Lesser Prairie-Chicken by Eleanor Briceati