

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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## Farm pollution

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5:25 p.m. CDT, May 14, 2012

The May 7 online editorial "Congress should reign in crop insurance" noted that the Senate's farm bill does not require land-stewardship practices in exchange for crop insurance subsidies. This is cause for alarm given agriculture pollution is a top cause of degraded rivers and lakes.

In Illinois, there are abundant reasons why farmers should be held to some pollution standards. Illinois water suppliers in **Springfield**, Decatur, **Bloomington** and Danville have had to invest millions of dollars in technologies that remove agrochemicals from drinking water. Recreational areas like Fox River Chain O'Lakes and Peoria Lake are filling up with eroded farmland soil.

Many farmers already do their part to reduce pollution thanks to the 1985 conservation compliance provision of the farm bill. Conservation compliance requires farmers to reduce erosion and preserve wetlands in order to receive certain subsidies. Unfortunately, crop insurance is not one of them.

Congress must demand a higher return for the environment in exchange for our more than \$8 billion annual investment in agricultural subsidies. Maintaining the status quo is a risky over-reliance on largely voluntary measures that have and will fall short of keeping our waters clean.

U.S. Sens. **Dick Durbin**, D-Ill., and **Mark Kirk**, R-Ill., should propose amendments to the farm bill that will link crop insurance to conservation compliance. The House also is in the process of writing a farm bill, so our congressmen should do the same.

-- Stacy James, water resources scientist, Prairie Rivers Network, Champaign

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