

## Craig Cox Senior Vice President of the Environmental Working Group discusses

### CONSERVATION AND THE 2014 FARM BILL



**April 23 Alice Campbell Alumni Center Ballroom**

5.30 pm Reception followed by 6.00-7.30 pm

presentation and discussion



Craig has devoted his working life to conservation. He began his career at the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources in 1977 as a field biologist and then moved to Washington DC where he served as Senior Staff Officer with the Board on Agriculture of the National Academy of Sciences and completed three major studies, including **Soil and Water Quality: An Agenda for Agriculture**. He then led the development of the conservation title of the **1996 farm bill** while serving as staff of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry and has remained involved in farm bill efforts ever since. Craig then joined the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service as a Special Assistant to the Chief and served briefly as **Acting Deputy Under-Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment** in the Department of Agriculture before moving to Iowa in 1998 to become **Executive Director of the Soil and Water Conservation Society**. In August 2008 he joined the **Environmental Working Group (EWG)** to direct EWG's Midwest office and lead the organization's research and advocacy work in agriculture, renewable energy, and climate change. Craig has degrees in Wildlife Ecology and Agricultural Economics from the University of Minnesota and is an avid fly fisherman, hunter and hiker.

Here is an abstract of Craig's talk

"The Agricultural Act of 2014 eliminated so-called Direct Payments and used most of the savings to enact several new revenue insurance options and a new countercyclical program which puts a much higher floor under prices of selected crops. These revenue and price guarantees are now the most important—and potentially very expensive—way that taxpayers support farm income. The law also reconnected the conservation compliance provisions of the 1985 farm to the crop insurance program and added a new SodSaver provision. These provisions are essentially a quid pro quo between farmers and taxpayers. In return for crop insurance premium subsidies and other federal farm program benefits, farmers are asked to take steps to cut soil erosion on their most vulnerable cropland, protect wetlands and refrain from breaking out native grassland and prairie. The new law comes during a period when high crop prices, biofuel mandates and competition for land have spurred substantial intensification and expansion of row crop production. The law also comes at a time when concerns about soil degradation, water pollution and loss of habitat are also intensifying. I will discuss my view of the conservation and environmental implications of the new farm bill and describe what I think will be needed to harmonize agriculture and the environment in what appears to be a challenging century."

*This event is being hosted by the Agroecology and Sustainable Agriculture Program in the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences in honor of Earth Day in partnership with the Student Chapter of the Illinois Soil and Water Conservation Society, the Agriculture Watershed Institute, Faith in Place, Illinois Stewardship Alliance and Prairie Rivers Network! The event is free and open to the public. Free parking will be available after 5.00 in lot D22 904 W. Oregon.*