

## **2017 CONSERVATION POLICY STATEMENT**

Since the birth of the Grange in 1867, our organization has advocated and taught that we are the stewards of the land and should leave the Earth in a better condition than we found it. The National Grange recognizes that the protection of the environment and the conservation of our national resources are vital national priorities. To protect our most vital resources – water and farmland- we encourage increased efforts to educate the public on the importance of our natural resources as a necessity for life of all types.

The National Grange should ensure that conservation programs continue to receive a high commitment. These programs should encourage farmers to farm in an environmentally sound manner, focusing on technical assistance, research, education, loans, and cost-share programs. We cannot support the zealous pursuit of unrealistic and unscientific conservation goals that cause unnecessary economic hardship for landowners and producers.

The Grange recognizes the importance of protection of all watersheds and understands that major watersheds do not adhere to boundaries of private and public lands. The National Grange opposes any mandate that suggests all watersheds are to meet the same water quality standards and the “locking up” of watersheds or portions thereof for a single use by any person or agency. The National Grange encourages localities and municipalities to consider building small watershed dams for flood control and water supply. The National Grange continues opposition to the Environmental Protection Agency and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Waters of the United States (WOTUS) regulation. The federal government has no basis for extending its regulatory arm across all waters everywhere in the country. Common sense would seem to prioritize impaired waters and begin working from there under the intent of the Clean Water Act.

We encourage the responsible stewardship of our natural resources from all who own or use them. We define responsible Stewardship as a balance between use, preservation, and the environmental standards appropriate to the regional needs.

The National Grange supports coordination among Federal, State and Local Governments when developing land use management plans. We urge Congress to include voluntary incentive-based assistance for conservation practices by farmers, ranchers, foresters, developers, and landowners in future Farm Bills, which will maintain a commitment to conservation. In that light, we also urge USDA to ensure that they use only scientifically based research when crafting regulations to implement the conservation portions of the Farm Bill. The optimum result should be that the environment be protected with the least amount of prime, productive farmland taken out of production.

*This covers MD-405 and portions of the National Master's address.*