



UNITED STATES SENATE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510

BARBARA A. MIKULSKI
MARYLAND

October 2, 2008

Governor Harry R. Hughes, President
Maryland Center for Agro-Ecology, Inc.
P.O. Box 169
Queenstown, Maryland 21658-0169

Dear Governor Hughes & Friends:

Greetings to the members and guests of the Maryland Center for Agro-Ecology on the occasion of your *Celebration of the Bounties of Maryland's Farms*. I wish I could be there with all my friends from Maryland's Ag community to enjoy this uplifting event.

Since its inception in 1999, The Maryland Center for Agro-Ecology has been true to its mission to advance the identification of the common ground that binds farmers, environmentalists and foresters. Together these groups have brought common sense consensus to many of our most difficult land use and water protection issues. The Center's very existence acknowledges louder than any sound bite that *to be a steward of our beloved Chesapeake Bay, you must also be a steward of the land*.

Friends, I applaud your pioneering efforts through scientific research and policy analysis hand in hand with education and outreach. And you know that I am on your side. The conservation section of the most recent Farm Bill included several programs that are critical to Maryland. This bill provided \$97M for the farmland protection program which allows states and non-profits to work with farm owners to protect farms and agricultural land from development pressures and sprawl. This is especially important to Maryland, where urban sprawl threatens not only our agricultural heritage, but our ability to retain green open space.

I was also pleased to be able to secure \$165M in mandatory funding for the Chesapeake Bay which provides for a technical assistance program to help farmers implement more conservation friendly measures onto their farms to reduce agriculture runoff. This money also provides energy related grants and loans to farmers who develop energy efficient projects such as convert manure to energy, helping to reduce the amount of nutrients flowing in the Bay.

Thank you for all you do every day to protect our state's unique resources and wonderful heritage. I look forward to continuing our work together to leave our children and grandchildren a better world and a cleaner Chesapeake Bay.

Sincerely,

Barbara A. Mikulski
United States Senator