

Rep. Jennifer McClellan (VA-04)
Committee on Agriculture Member Day Hearing
12/6/23

Good morning, Chairman Thompson and Ranking Member Scott. I stand before you to discuss my bipartisan bill with Representative Lawler, H.R. 6232, the Coordination for Soil Carbon Research and Monitoring Act. Soil carbon sequestration refers to land management practices that promote the absorption of carbon into soil. These practices offer clear agricultural and environmental benefits, making operations more resilient to drought, heavy rainfall, and other extreme weather conditions that are exacerbated by climate change. Experts estimate that soil could store almost 5 billion metric tons of carbon dioxide worldwide each year, which equates to preventing about 13 percent of global annual greenhouse gas emissions from entering the atmosphere.

In Virginia, some farmers are already utilizing climate smart land management practices, increasing their cropland productivity while protecting long-term conservation. However, increased federal coordination will allow more farmers and ranchers to quickly adopt these practices in their operations. Currently, soil carbon research and monitoring efforts across the federal government are fragmented and siloed. This leads to a lack of interagency communication that prevents us from fully understanding the gaps in research and monitoring technologies for soil carbon. Moving forward, a coordinated strategy to scale soil carbon sequestration should be developed to streamline efforts.

My bill establishes an Interagency Committee on Soil Carbon Research led by the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy. It directs the interagency committee to develop a cross-agency strategic plan for federal research, development, and deployment for soil carbon research, sampling, and measurement methodologies. It also establishes working groups to coordinate soil carbon research priorities including monitoring, reporting, and verification, data collection and management, fundamental research, and robust engagement with agricultural producers and communities. Finally, my bill requires regular reporting to Congress on soil carbon research and monitoring activities. I ask for your consideration of this commonsense, bipartisan bill and look forward to working together to advance soil carbon sequestration efforts.

Additionally, I want to urge the committee to ensure that the next Farm Bill uses the almost \$20 billion from the Inflation Reduction Act for its intended purpose in USDA conservation programs. Soil carbon sequestration and other climate-smart agricultural practices are a clear win-win for our farming communities and the planet. Thank you for your time and consideration. I yield back.