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ELCR's Response to Agriculture Secretary Vilsack's Announcement on the Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program (VPA-HIP)

The Equine Land Conservation Resource, with 140 Conservation Partner member organizations representing over 1.2 million horsemen, applaud Agriculture Secretary Vilsack and the USDA's new program, the Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program (VPA-HIP) to access private land for recreation. Horsemen across the nation enjoy viewing and photographing wildlife and where legal; hunting from horseback. The growing community of equestrians are seeking additional recreational and trail riding spaces. We think it especially important that programs such as this reach out to a multitude of recreationists. Additionally, horseback riding enables those with physical disabilities to see wildlife in a natural setting. The demand for accessible private lands for wildlife viewing by horseback is increasing while public dollars are scarce. We believe government programs such as VPA-HIP should provide the greatest good to the greatest number of wildlife interested recreationists.

According to the USDA press release, The Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program (VPA-HIP) is a competitive grants program that is only available for state and tribal governments. Applications for grant funding may be made through the federal government's grants portal - www.grants.gov. VPA-HIP grant funding may be used to expand existing public access programs or create new public access programs, or provide incentives to improve wildlife habitat on enrolled lands. Up to \$50 million is available through VPA-HIP through Fiscal Year 2012.

For more information, or to get involved in horse land and trail conservation in your community, visit www.elcr.org or contact ELCR at (859) 455-8383.

About the Equine Land Conservation Resource (ELCR)

The Equine Land Conservation Resource is the only national not-for-profit organization advancing the conservation of land for horse-related activity. ELCR serves as an information resource and clearinghouse for land and horse owners on issues related to equine land conservation, land use planning, land stewardship/best management practices, trails, liability and equine economic development. If you want to know more about ELCR, visit our website at www.elcr.org or call (859) 455-8383.