

The Nebraska Farm Bureau is urging members of Nebraska's Congressional delegation to extend legislation preventing the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) from taking enforcement action against farms and ranches under the agency's Spill Prevention, Control and Countermeasures (SPCC) Rule.

Federal legislation preventing EPA from enforcing the agency's oil spill regulations on farms and ranches is set to expire at the end of September.

Meanwhile, Farm Bureau has developed a one-stop SPCC information and resource page for its members on the organization's website at nefb.org.

"EPA's oil spill regulation is more than 30 years old and was originally intended to help manage spills from large oil storage facilities such as oil refineries and airports," said Steve Nelson, president of Nebraska Farm Bureau. "EPA has contended that farms and ranches had never been exempt from the oil spill regulations and finalized farm specific requirements in 2009."

Nebraska Farm Bureau worked with members of Congress in supporting the current delay in EPA SPCC enforcement actions and would like another delay added to the Continuing Budget Resolution to allow Congress more time to fix the rule."

EPA's regulations require any farm or ranch with above-ground oil storage capacity of greater than 1,320 gallons at any one location to have an oil spill prevention plan in place. EPA had established a farm compliance deadline of May 10; however, Congress passed legislation preventing EPA from enforcing the SPCC rule on farms and ranches until Sept. 22.

Efforts to change the SPCC rule are currently under consideration in the U.S. House of Representatives and have already passed the Senate as part of the Water Resources Development Act.

Farm Bureau continues to work with a bipartisan group in Congress on those reforms.

"Since EPA started the regulatory process, we've maintained there is no significant history of oil spills on farms or ranches to warrant EPA regulations in this area," said Nelson.

"There is bipartisan agreement on the fact that the inclusion of agriculture families under the rule is just another example of government regulations that have gone too far."

Farm Bureau continues to work with Congress to roll back this over-reaching rule that will do little to protect the environment but only increase red tape on farmers and ranchers.

"At the same time, it's important our members are aware of what's happening on this challenging issue," said Nelson.