

February 27, 2018

The Honorable Thad Cochran  
Chairman, Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patrick J. Leahy  
Ranking Member, Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John Hoeven  
Chairman, Subcommittee on Agriculture,  
Rural Development, Food and Drug  
Administration, and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jeff Merkley  
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Agriculture  
Rural Development, Food and Drug  
Administration, and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
United State Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairmen Cochran and Hoeven and Ranking Members Leahy and Merkley:

Wildlife causes more than \$12.8 billion in damage each year to natural resources, public infrastructures, private property and agriculture. USDA Wildlife Services (WS) works to prevent, minimize or manage this damage and to protect human health and safety from conflicts with wildlife. Wildlife damage to U.S. livestock, aquaculture, small grains, fruits, vegetables and other agricultural products has been estimated to reach nearly \$1 billion annually. Wildlife predators cause more than \$178 million in death loss to livestock; field crop losses due to wildlife total \$619 million annually; losses to vegetables, fruits and nuts total \$146 million annually; and 70 percent of catfish farmers incur wildlife-related damage resulting in losses of \$10 to \$13 million annually from double-crested cormorants in Mississippi alone. As a result, WS is an essential program to U.S. agriculture.

The spread of wildlife-borne diseases to humans, livestock and other wildlife is a growing concern. WS monitors and manages pests and diseases in the United States. WS is often the first line of defense in reducing and eliminating diseases such as the West Nile virus, avian influenza, pandemic H1N1, chronic wasting disease, pseudo rabies, bubonic plague, Hantavirus, Lyme disease, bovine tuberculosis and rabies. In fact, rabies-associated costs range from \$300 to \$450 million annually in the United States primarily for pet vaccinations, education, diagnostics, post-exposure treatment and case investigations. In fiscal year (FY) 2017, WS collected more than 59,000 samples in their efforts to combat and eradicate wildlife disease with the majority of these directed at highly pathogenic avian influenza surveillance. WS also prevents entry of and controls invasive species such as feral swine, nutria, the brown tree snake, and the European starling. Feral swine are a subject of increasing concern as potential carriers or catalysts for a variety of diseases. It is estimated that there are more than 6 million feral swine in at least 39 states and while initial damage estimates were greater than \$1.5 billion per year, more recent reports suggest that figure is more likely between \$2 and \$2.5 billion annually with more than \$800 million of damage to agriculture resources.

In FY2017 alone, WS conducted 70,902 technical assistance projects (a 5% increase over FY 2016 figures) to reduce wildlife damage to property in urban, suburban and rural locations across the country, which include homes, schools, industrial facilities, roads, bridges, airports and airport runways, dams and electrical and water systems. One example of this work is WS efforts in reducing deer collisions with automobiles. More than 1.5 million deer-vehicle collisions occur each year, injuring tens of thousands of people, killing dozens, and causing more than \$4 billion in damage. In addition, WS works to protect wetlands habitat, riparian habitat, tidal marsh and timber from a variety of pest species including feral hogs and nutria, as well as the destruction that beaver can cause.

Protection of natural resources is a growing need for WS. Last year, WS invested resources in conservation of game species including mule deer, bighorn sheep, antelope and waterfowl in eight states. Also in FY2017, WS spent \$9.8 million for cooperative work with federal and state agencies to protect and assist 187 threatened or endangered species in 40 states, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. In more than 95 percent of the projects, local threatened and endangered species either increased or remained stable.

Nearly 180,000 wildlife strikes with civil aviation have been reported since WS began keeping records in 1990. In 2015, there were more than 21,000 wildlife collisions with civil and military aircraft reported costing the total U.S. aviation industry more than \$6 billion since 1990. WS provided direct services at 421 airports in FY2017 including population management through harassment, habitat modification or removal. Technical assistance, such as initial consultations and wildlife hazard assessments, was provided at 864 airports across the country. Through the process, WS trained more than 5,097 non-WS personnel at 406 airports to prevent or minimize the impact of wildlife strikes.

As the “Miracle on the Hudson” demonstrated in 2009, the management of wildlife hazards on and near our nation’s airports is a critical safety priority. WS provides valuable support to the aviation community in addressing these hazards. From its assistance in preparing FAA-required wildlife hazard assessments to its help with managing hazardous wildlife populations, WS staff ensure that U.S. airports both meet the regulatory obligations under 14 CFR Part 139 and reduce the safety risks associated with aircraft wildlife strikes. WS also assists the FAA in monitoring national trends regarding wildlife populations and the hazards they pose to aviation. At a time when airports are facing significantly expanded wildlife hazard management requirements through recently issued FAA Advisory Circulars and grant assurance modifications, its role will be even more critical to the aviation community going forward.

It has been WS's cooperative nature that has allowed it to accomplish all of the above listed programs and has made it the most cost effective and efficient program in the federal government in the areas of wildlife damage management and public health and safety. In FY2017, WS had more than 4,600 cooperative agreements. WS cooperators include agriculture, forestry, private industry, state wildlife agencies, state departments of health, state departments of agriculture, schools, universities, counties, local governments, Indian nations, homeowner associations, conservation groups and others that, together with WS, mitigate the damage and dangers that public wildlife can inflict.

Chairmen Cochran and Hoeven and Ranking Members Leahy and Merkley, we appreciate your demonstrated leadership and strong support of this essential program. Our organizations are committed to working with you to strengthen WS resources and to ensure a continued federal partnership in the responsible management of our nation’s wildlife.

Air Line Pilots Association, Int’l  
Airlines for America  
American Association of Airport Executives  
American Beekeeping Federation  
American Dairy Goat Association  
American Farm Bureau Federation  
American Feed Industry Association  
American Goat Federation  
American Horse Council  
American Sheep Industry Association  
American Society of Agricultural and Biological  
Engineers  
American Veterinary Medical Association

Animal Health Institute  
Association of American Veterinary Medical  
Colleges  
Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies  
Association of National Grasslands  
Big Game Forever  
Catfish Farmers of America  
Catfish Institute  
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation  
Fur Industries of North America  
Livestock Marketing Association  
Mohair Council of America  
Mule Deer Foundation

National Aquaculture Association  
National Association of Counties  
National Association of Federal Veterinarians  
National Association of State Departments of  
Agriculture  
National Cattlemen's Beef Association  
National Farmers Union  
National Grange  
National Lamb Feeders Association  
National Milk Producers Federation  
National Pork Producers Council  
National Renderers Association  
National Rifle Association  
National Shooting Sports Foundation  
National Sorghum Producers  
National Sunflower Association

Alabama Catfish Producers  
Alabama Cattlemen's Association  
Alabama Farmers Federation  
Alabama Meat Goat and Sheep Producers  
Arizona Cattle Feeders Association  
Arizona Cattle Growers' Association  
Arizona Cattlemen's Association  
Arizona Wool Producers Association  
Arkansas Cattlemen's Association  
Arkansas State Sheep Council  
Association of Oregon Counties  
Association of Texas Soil and Water  
Conservation Districts  
California Agricultural Commissioners and  
Sealers Association  
California Cattlemen's Association  
California Farm Bureau Federation  
California Pork Producers Association  
California Wool Growers Association  
Colorado Cattlemen's Association  
Colorado Wool Growers Association  
Connecticut Sheep Breeders Association, Inc  
Delta Council  
Eastern Regional Conference of the Council of  
State Governments  
Empire Sheep Producers  
Florida Aquaculture Association  
Florida Cattlemen's Association  
Florida Tropical Fish Farms Association  
Garden State Sheep Breeders Inc  
Georgia Agribusiness Council Inc  
Georgia Cattlemen's Association  
Georgia Sheep and Wool Growers Association  
Hawaii Sheep and Goat Association

National Women Involved in Farm Economics  
North American Meat Institute  
Public Lands Council  
R-CALF USA  
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation  
Rural and Agriculture Council of America  
Safari Club International  
Society for Range Management  
Sportsmen for Fish and Wildlife  
State Agriculture and Rural Leaders Association  
Striped Bass Growers Association  
United States Animal Health Association  
U.S. Cattlemen's Association  
USA Rice  
Wild Sheep Foundation  
Wildlife Management Institute

Idaho Cattle Association  
Idaho Farm Bureau Federation  
Idaho Outfitters & Guides Association  
Idaho Wool Growers Association  
Illinois Beef Association  
Illinois Lamb and Wool Producers Inc  
Independent Beef Association of North Dakota  
Independent Cattlemen's Association of Texas  
Indiana Sheep Association  
Iowa Cattlemen's Association  
Iowa Sheep Industry Association  
Kansas Livestock Association  
Kansas Sheep Association  
Kentucky Aquaculture Association  
Kentucky Cattlemen's Association  
Kentucky Sheep and Wool Producers  
Association  
Louisiana Cattlemen's Association  
Maine Sheep Breeders Association  
Maryland Sheep Breeders Association  
Massachusetts Federation of Sheep Associations  
Meat Sheep Alliance of Florida, Inc  
Michigan Sheep Producers Association  
Midwestern Legislative Conference of the  
Council of State Governments  
Minnesota Lamb and Wool Producer  
Association  
Minnesota State Cattlemen's Association  
Missouri Cattlemen's Association  
Missouri Sheep Producers, Inc  
Montana Association of State Grazing Districts  
Montana Farm Bureau Federation  
Montana Public Lands Council  
Montana Stockgrowers Association

Montana Wool Growers Association  
Nebraska Cattlemen, Inc.  
Nebraska Farmers Union  
Nebraska Sheep and Goat Producers  
Nebraska State Grange  
Nebraska Women Involved in Farm Economics  
Nevada Cattlemen's Association  
Nevada Department of Agriculture  
Nevada Farm Bureau Federation  
Nevada Rangeland Resources Commission  
Nevada State Grazing Board Central Committee  
Nevada Wool Growers Association  
New Hampshire Sheep and Wool Growers  
Association  
New Mexico Cattle Growers' Association  
New Mexico Department of Agriculture  
New Mexico Farm & Livestock Bureau  
New Mexico Federal Lands Council  
New Mexico Trappers Association  
New Mexico Wool Growers, Inc  
North Carolina Sheep Producers Association  
North Dakota Lamb and Wool Producers  
Association  
North Dakota Stockmen's Association  
North Dakota Department of Agriculture  
North Dakota Game and Fish Department  
Northeast States Association for Agricultural  
Stewardship  
Ohio Cattlemen's Association  
Ohio Farm Bureau Federation  
Ohio Sheep Improvement Association  
Oklahoma Cattlemen's Association  
Oregon Cattlemen's Association  
Oregon Dairy Farmers Association  
Oregon Farm Bureau Federation  
Oregon Forest Industries Council  
Oregon Outdoor Council  
Oregon Seed Council  
Oregon Sheep Growers Association  
Oregon Small Woodlands Association  
Oregonians for Food & Shelter  
Pennsylvania Cattlemen's Association  
Pennsylvania Farm Bureau  
Pennsylvania Sheep and Wool Growers  
Association  
Rhode Island Sheep Cooperative  
South Carolina Sheep Industries Association  
South Dakota Cattlemen's Association  
South Dakota Sheep Growers Association  
South East Dairy Farmers Association  
Sportsmen for Fish and Wildlife Idaho

Tennessee Cattlemen's Association  
Tennessee Sheep Producers Association  
Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers  
Association  
Texas Cattle Feeders Association  
Texas Farm Bureau  
Texas Pork Producers Association  
Texas Sheep and Goat Predator Management  
Board  
Texas Sheep and Goat Raisers' Association  
Texas Wildlife Damage Management  
Association  
The Council of State Governments – Midwest  
The Port Authority of New York and New  
Jersey  
United Dairymen of Arizona  
Utah Cattlemen's Association  
Utah Department of Agriculture and Food  
Utah Division of Wildlife Resources  
Utah Farm Bureau Federation  
Utah Wild Sheep Foundation  
Utah Wildlife Board  
Utah Wool Growers Association  
Vermont Sheep and Goat Association  
Virginia Farm Bureau Federation  
Virginia Cattlemen's Association  
Virginia Sheep Producers Association  
Wasco County Livestock Association  
Washington Cattlemen's Association  
Washington Cattle Feeders Association  
Washington State Sheep Producers  
West Virginia Cattlemen's Association  
West Virginia Farm Bureau  
West Virginia Shepherds Federation  
Western Forestry and Conservation Association  
Western United Dairymen  
Wisconsin Bear Hunters Association  
Wisconsin Cattlemen's Association  
Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation  
Wisconsin Firearms Owners, Ranges, Club and  
Educators  
Wisconsin Sheep Breeders Cooperative  
Wyoming Animal Damage Management Board  
Wyoming Association of County Predatory  
Animal Boards  
Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation  
Wyoming Game and Fish Department  
Wyoming Sportsmen for Fish & Wildlife  
Wyoming Stock Growers Association  
Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation  
Wyoming Wool Growers Association